SIX CENTURIES AT TUNHUANG

A SHORT ACCOUNT OF THE STEIN COLLECTION
OF CHINESE MSS. IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM

by

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SIR AUREL STEIN (as he afterwards became) started on his second journey from India into Chinese Turkestan in 1906, passing over the Hindu Kush through Kashgar, where he was able to engage the services of a Chinese secretary. After excavations at various places in the desert, he reached the Tunhuang[1] oasis on the border of Kansu[2] in March, 1907, and lost no time in paying a visit to the famous Ch'ien-fo-tung,[3] or Caves of the Thousand Buddhas, situated in a barren valley some nine miles south-west of the city. Here are hundreds of cave-temples, some dating back to the fourth century, honeycombing in irregular tiers the face of a cliff. Rumours had spread abroad of a great hidden deposit of ancient manuscripts accidentally discovered about two years earlier in a walled-up side chapel adjoining one of the temples. Stein found the place jealously guarded by an unlettered Taoist priest, who was with difficulty induced to open the door into the secret chamber. The sight disclosed was astonishing: "heaped up in layers, but without any order, there appeared in the dim light of the priest's little lamp a solid mass of manuscript bundles rising to a height of nearly 10 feet, and filling, as subsequent measurement showed, close on 500 cubic feet." The total hoard must have comprised something like 13,500 paper rolls, each about a foot in width and averaging 15 to 20 feet in length (many are much longer, and one now in the British Museum actually measures over 90 feet), besides a very large number of fragments and some hundreds of booklets; also large bundles of paintings on silk and cotton. Most of the texts were in Chinese, and it is with them alone that I propose to deal, though there were numerous manuscripts in other languages such as Sanskrit, Sogdian, Brahmi and Tibetan. From internal evidence there can be little doubt that the walling-up must have taken place soon after A.D. 1000, probably because of some threatened invasion by the newly established State of Hsi Hsia.[4] These manuscripts, covering a period of six hundred years, would appear to have been brought together for safety from various monasteries in the neighbourhood, and to have lain, hidden and forgotten, for just about nine hundred years more.

NOTE—Small raised numerals refer to Chinese characters collected on pp. 49 and 50. Numerals in bold type refer to items in the Bibliography on pp. 46–48. S. followed by a number indicates a manuscript, P. a printed document, in the Stein Collection.

After protracted negotiations, Stein persuaded the guardian priest first to allow him to examine, then to transfer to an improvised store-room of his own, and finally to purchase a considerable portion of the whole collection. Unfortunately he himself knew no Chinese, and even with the help of his assistant (who was no great scholar, and entirely ignorant of Buddhist literature) he could do very little in the way of selection: he was obliged to take in bulk and trust to luck, which certainly favoured him on the whole. But the net result was that the collection which eventually reached the British Museum largely consisted of vast numbers of a few popular Buddhist works. Many are fine examples of penmanship, it is true; but one cannot help regretting that hundreds of superfluous copies of the *Lotus* and *Diamond Sūtras* were sent to this country when there was so much else of value that might have been acquired instead. In the following year the Caves were visited by a young French sinologist, Professor Paul Pelliot, who spent three weeks in careful selection on behalf of the Bibliothèque Nationale. A certain proportion of the remaining MSS. was subsequently removed to Peking, but that much was left is evident from the considerable further acquisition which Stein was able to make on his third expedition in 1916. The cream of the collection, then, is divided between London and Paris, as the Chinese were too late in the field to secure much of first-rate importance.

As soon as he had leisure, Stein compiled a very interesting personal account of his explorations which was published in 1912 under the title *Ruins of Desert Cathay* (**23**). Chapters 52 and 64–70 are those dealing with the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas. This was followed ten years later by *Serindia* (**24**), a truly monumental work of a more scientific character in which the fruits of the expedition are reviewed and discussed. It was not until after the Great War that the manuscripts of the Stein Collection were placed in my charge, and I was able to begin sorting, examining, and cataloguing them one by one. It was no light task, even in a physical sense, for the total length of the sheets which had constantly to be unrolled and rolled up again must have amounted to something between 10 and 20 miles. But the tedium of this process was amply compensated by the thrill of excitement when some new and unexpected treasure came to light. The catalogue was completed some years ago, just before the MSS. were removed from the Museum for safety, but has not yet been printed. From the first, every facility has been granted to all serious students wishing to copy or obtain photographs of any of the MSS. A fine collection of such photographs (of Buddhist texts only) was published by Mr. K. Yabuki in 1933, with an accompanying volume of explanation and comment (**34**). From

the Pelliot Collection, a large number of miscellaneous pieces have been printed in two volumes entitled *Tun-huang ling shih* (**19**) and *Sha chou wên lu* (**18**). Although the total evacuation of the Chinese Library has been some handicap to me in preparing this monograph, the notes in my private possession and other material to which I still have access make it possible to give not only a general description of the Stein Collection but also a number of translated extracts from some of the more interesting texts.

The manuscripts number about 7000, and fall naturally into three main groups: nearly 85 per cent of them are Buddhist, a little over 3 per cent Taoist, and about 12 per cent secular or non-religious. In addition there are two Manichaean rolls, and sixteen printed documents. The canonical Buddhist texts have been arranged in the order adopted in Nanjio's Catalogue (**21**). All the more important *sūtras* are represented, and it is interesting to note which of them were in special favour at different dates. During the sixth century the *Parinirvāṇa*[5] is predominant, but soon after the rise of the T'ang dynasty it seems to have lost much of its popularity, and in the second half of the seventh century its place is definitely taken by the *Lotus Sūtra*, especially in Kumārajīva's translation (*Miao fa lien hua ching*).[6] There are actually 1046 copies of various parts of this work, including small fragments. The same translator's version of the *Diamond Sūtra* was also much in demand from the beginning of the seventh century onward. No fewer than 533 copies of this short *sūtra* remain, of which thirteen are dated, but only twenty-one are complete. Early in the eighth century I-ching's[7] new translation of the *Suvarṇa-prabhāsa-sūtra* (*Chin kuang ming tsui shêng wang ching*[8]) comes into prominence, to the extent of 239 copies; this appears to be the latest of the *sūtras* to achieve a circulation beyond the ordinary. Of the huge *Mahāprajñā-pāramitā-sūtra*[9] in 600 sections, translated by the famous pilgrim Hsüan-tsang,[10] there are 760 pieces, not one of which, curiously enough, bears a date. Others which are well—almost too well—represented in the Collection are the *Prajñā-pāramitā-hṛdaya-sūtra*,[11] a very brief condensation of the foregoing, the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-sūtra*,[12] and the *Sūraṅgama-sūtra*.[13] The Vinaya and Abhidharma texts, dealing with discipline and philosophy respectively, are comparatively few in number, but being again repeated *ad nauseam* fill nearly three hundred rolls. Fragments of all classes that I have failed to identify amount to 282 in all, a number which is not unduly large perhaps, considering that the first sheet of a roll, containing the title, is most exposed to wear and tear, and is therefore too often missing.

Texts that are not in the present Buddhist Canon include many apocryphal

sūtras which had a great vogue in their day, such as the *Wu liang shou tsung yao ching*,[14] treating of the Pure Land of Amitābha (289 rolls), and the *Fo ming ching*,[15] invocations of Buddha (152 rolls). The *Sūtra of the Ten Kings of the Underworld*[16] (S. 3961) demands some attention not only for its content but also because it is lavishly illustrated with coloured drawings. Here we see in turn each of the ten courts in which departed souls are judged, and the appropriate punishments allotted to sinners. In the first court the regiments of the dead, "as numerous as particles of dust," are marshalled for their crossing over "the River of Necessity" (PLATE I). In another names are registered, in yet another there is a balance for the weighing of good and evil deeds, the results being taken down by two recording spirits. Then each soul is grasped by the hair and made to gaze into the mirror of his past deeds; but an image of Buddha is brought in, which may incline the Judge to mercy. In the eighth Court sentence is passed on the poor wretches who have failed to score the requisite number of good marks. The ruler of the ninth Court decides in what particular shape each soul shall be reborn, and the tenth Court is presided over by the King who turns the Wheel. Here the shades are whisked off the wheel of fate to their rebirth in one of the Six Paths or states of existence, namely those of Buddha, man, animals, reptiles, hungry ghosts, and hell. The fate that overtakes those placed in the last category may shock the sensitive; but at any rate the ghastly conception of eternal punishment has never been admitted even by the more debased forms of Buddhism.

Most of the commentaries that have been preserved are on the Vinaya and Abhidharma and, for some obscure reason, on the *Vimalakīrti-sūtra*:[12] fifty-six pieces of commentary are devoted to this very readable work, and only eleven to all the other *sūtras* put together! The remaining Buddhist texts may be distributed under the following heads: discourses or compositions, eulogies and funeral lamentations, metrical pieces or *gāthās*, prayers of all kinds, formulas of confession, *dhāraṇī* or charms, rules of Buddhist discipline, calendars, *śīla* certificates, tales and biographies, miscellaneous notes and scraps. *Śīla* certificates are documents formally publishing the fact that certain persons have solemnly "accepted," that is, undertaken to observe, a set of five, eight, or ten commandments. The ceremony was performed in a temple by a priest, whose name is always given. Most of these certificates are dated and bear the impression of several red seals or portrait-stamps of Buddha. Those in the Museum all fall within the second half of the tenth century, with the exception of one (S. 2851) dated 780, which also happens to be the only certificate in which the commandments

are enumerated. These are directed against (1) wilfully killing any sentient being; (2) stealing other people's property; (3) lustful desires; (4) lying; (5) buying wine for oneself or others; (6) publishing the sins of monks or laymen; (7) self-commendation; (8) avarice, or meanness; (9) anger, and the causing of anger in others; (10) speaking ill of the Triratna (i.e. Buddha, the Law, and the Church) or causing others to do so.

Among the eulogistic compositions is one in which "Ten Causes of Gratitude towards one's Mother"[17] are thus set forth, with explanatory comments: (1) "The protection of the child in her womb." (2) "The pangs of labour preceding childbirth." (3) "The act of parturition and the forgetting of grief." (4) "Swallowing the bitter and spitting out the sweet." This curious phrase, which occurs again in a set of verses on filial piety, is explained as referring to the mother's unselfishness in disregarding her own personal needs in order to look after her baby: "though she may be fed on wine and meat she will never grow fat." (5) "Suckling and rearing the infant." Instances are given of a mother's unceasing watchfulness: "If she hears the baby's cry she cannot sit still . . . but must steal away and have a peep at him." (6) "Back to dry and then to wet." This item deals very frankly with the unpleasantness of sharing a bed with a young child, and ends with the exclamation: "The fondness of parents under trials like these is seen to be of more than heavenly merit!" (7) "Washing the unclean." The commentary begins by depicting the mother scrubbing her child's ten fingers despite the bitter blast of winter; but the rest is a somewhat inappropriate eulogy of the filial crow which brings food to the mother-bird in its beak. (8) "Incurring bad *karma* for the sake of her offspring." The accompanying text is a little obscure, but it would seem that if the mother violates any Buddhist law, such as the killing of animals for food, it is not done for any selfish purpose, but because she is even prepared, for the sake of her children, to be "engulfed" in the stream of reincarnation. (9) "Dwelling in thought on her children when they are far away." (10) "Loving sympathy in general." The whole composition is in a sort of clumsy, irregular verse, with a new rhyme for each section. Filial piety is a virtue usually associated with Confucianism, but there is a short note at the beginning which suggests that special regard was paid to it by the Buddhist Church in China: "Any kind and filial son or daughter who shows deep gratitude for their parents' goodness will be reborn in heaven."

The Buddhist biographical texts are mostly episodic and short; but there are fairly detailed memoirs and notices of various eminent monks such as Kumārajīva, Buddhoṣingha, and Fa-hsien,[18] and a very valuable

record of the patriarchs of the Dhyāna[19] school who were concerned in the transmission of the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*[20] (S. 2054). Among the legends and tales are two which describe visits to the underworld. The first, a popularized version of the *Fo shuo yü lan p'ên ching*[21] in alternate prose and verse, tells how Mahā-Maudgalyāyana, one of the ten chief disciples of Śākyamuni, gallantly went down to rescue his mother (S. 2614). The MS. is bold and clear, and occupies the whole of a 20-foot roll. Of the other narrative only a portion remains (S. 2630). Its theme is the summoning of the T'ang emperor T'ai Tsung[22] to the infernal regions, where he converses with the judge Ts'ui Tzŭ-yü.[23] According to tradition, he was brought before a tribunal to answer for the slaughter of his rebellious brethren at the Hsüan-wu Gate,[24] but was acquitted and allowed to return to earth. The longest of these Buddhist tales is preserved complete in two consecutive rolls reaching a length of 34½ feet (S. 2073). It is an interesting but unhistorical account of the Chinese monks Hui-yüan[25] and his teacher Tao-an[26] of the fourth century, embodying long discourses which explain the doctrines of the *Parinirvāṇa Sūtra*.[5] The colophon is dated 972.

About the tail-piece or colophon (as it may conveniently though not quite accurately be called) which is often to be found at the end of the Buddhist texts and the *sūtras* in particular, something must now be said. It usually contains the name of the person who caused the copy to be made, his pious intention in so doing, and in many cases an exact date. The earliest example of a dated colophon is appended to a Vinaya text, *Prātimokṣa* of the Sarvāstivādin (S. 797), which does not agree exactly with any in the present Canon (PLATE II). It runs as follows: " At the *hsü* hour of the fifth day of the twelfth moon of the *i-ssŭ* year, the first of the regnal period Chien-ch'u [i.e. between 7 and 9 p.m. on the 10th January, 406], the *bhikṣu* Tê-yu,[27] who received the full disciplinary vows from the monk instructor Fa-hsing,[28] the master of disciple Pao-hui,[29] and the master of doctrine Hui-ying,[30] south of the city of Tunhuang, and subsequently went into retreat during the summer with his companions in the ceremony, Tao-fu,[31] Hui-yü,[32] and others, twelve in all, has written out the commandments for recitation as far as ' the completion of destiny,' merely copying the characters in clumsy fashion. The clumsiness of his hand causes him shame, and he adds this note in the hope that readers may only meditate on the sense and forbear to laugh at the handwriting."

In striking contrast to the simplicity of this statement is the careful reasoning shown in a colophon dated 550 (S. 4366): " Happiness is not fallacious in its response: pray for it, and the influence will be felt. Results

do not come of themselves: concentrate on the causes, and successful attainment will follow. Thus, the Buddhist disciple and *bhikṣuṇī* Tao-jung,[33] because her conduct in a previous life was not properly regulated, has been reborn in the vile estate which is that of a woman; and if she does not obey and honour the wonderful decree of Buddha, how shall she find response in the effects which are to come? Therefore, having cut down her expenses in the articles of food and clothing, she has reverently caused a section of the *Nirvāṇa-sūtra* to be copied, praying that those who read it through may be exalted in mind to supreme wisdom, and that those who promote its circulation may cause others to be influenced to their enlightenment She also prays that in her present life she may abide in meditation, without further sickness or suffering; that her parents in seven other incarnations who have died in the past or will die in the future, and her family and kinsfolk now living, may enjoy surpassing bliss in the four realms, and that what they seek may fall out according to their desire; also that all disciples of Buddha naturally endowed with perception may be embraced in the scope of this prayer."

In another roll (S. 3935) we read of a Military Superintendent who made a vow to read sections of certain *sūtras* on behalf of his deceased father and mother: " he prays that their spirits may travel to the Pure Land, eternally exempt from the three unhappy states of existence and the eight calamities, and constantly hear the Law of Buddha. He also prays that happiness may attend the members of his family, both great and small, to their hearts' content, that blessings of all kinds may daily descend upon them, and that all evils may be dispersed like clouds; that the King's highway may be free and open, and that robbers and thieves may be driven away; that pestilence may not prevail, and that wind and rain may come in their due season; and that all suffering beings may speedily obtain deliverance."

The next colophon (in S. 87) from which we shall quote has a more worldly flavour about it. A certain Assistant Commissioner tells us that in the year 700, when ordering the *Diamond Sūtra* to be copied, " he made a vow that if he was promoted to the sixth official grade he would have one roll copied every month, and that if he was promoted to the fifth grade he would have two rolls of a *sūtra* copied every month. But for a long time, owing to warlike operations, paper and ink were not procurable, so that he did not fulfil his vow. Now at last, these materials having been procured, he has been able to have this copy made, to be unrolled and read on behalf of all without exception." In this colophon we find five of the new characters adopted eleven years previously by the usurping Empress Wu,[34] on whose

special behalf the *sūtra* was copied. Their original number appears to have been twelve, but later authorities enumerate sixteen or nineteen. Their use continued until her abdication in 705, and they occur in forty-eight of the Stein MSS. Another empress, Wei Hou,[35] figures in the following piece, dated 710: "On the eleventh day of the twelfth moon [15th January] the female devotee Madame Têng[36] reverently caused a copy of the *Amita Sūtra*[37] to be made, firstly for the benefit of our Divine Emperor and Divine Empress, that their sovran influence may never be exhausted; and secondly on behalf of the living beings of the universe, that they may one and all reach the Western regions [i.e. Amitābha's paradise] and together share in the highest degree of felicity." This pious aspiration appears grimly ironical in the light of subsequent events; for only a few months later the Emperor (Chung Tsung[38]) was poisoned by his "divine" but adulterous consort, who then tried to seize the supreme power, but was herself massacred with all her clan.

Some of the other colophons are even longer and more elaborate than any of the above. The introduction of what may be called the tabulated colophon is symptomatic of a decline in true religious spirit. Here, in place of the prayer on behalf of a deceased relative or a living sufferer, or an unselfish offering made in the interests of sentient existence as a whole, we find only a formal enumeration of the persons, lay or clerical, responsible for the production of the manuscript roll. Incidentally, and contrary to what one might expect, the actual copying of *sūtras* seems to have been done more often by a layman than by a monk. This is the case in S. 5319, dated 671, where we are given the names not only of the scribe but of the "dyer of *sūtras*" (that is, of course, the paper on which they were written), six "perusers," two directors, three revisers, a certain high official, and finally a general superintendent. We are also told that nineteen sheets of hemp paper were used. An indication of this kind is sometimes useful in enabling us to calculate how much of an unknown and imperfect text has been lost.

The Chinese have a passion for chronological exactitude not shared by most Eastern nations, and as many as 380 separate pieces in the Collection are carefully dated. A complete descriptive account of these dated manuscripts is given in a series of six articles contributed to the *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies* between 1935 and 1943(**9**). Besides the manuscript of 406 (PLATE II), five others also belong to the fifth century: part of an official census, of which more later on, a fragmentary list of articles enclosed in a tomb, a *sūtra*, and two commentaries. From the sixth century there are

44 dated manuscripts, and in the tenth the number rises to 160, an average of more than one and a half to every year. Owing to the association of these dates with different kinds of paper and handwriting, nearly all the manuscripts of the Collection can be assigned with some confidence to particular periods. The paper of even the earliest rolls is of wonderfully good quality. The oldest of all was made from the inner bark of a species of mulberry (*Broussonetia papyrifera*), and is of a brownish buff colour, tough and rather thick. The surface and sizing are both good. Other varieties of paper in the fifth century were made from China-grass (ramie), or from that and mulberry bark mixed. One of them has a smooth, glossy surface of a very pale cream colour, and is also tough, though somewhat less thick. Characteristic of the sixth century is a thin crisp paper sometimes stained a rich golden-yellow. After the disastrous rebellion of An Lu-shan[39] in the eighth century a rapid deterioration sets in, and thenceforward most of the papers are very coarse and flabby, drab in colour, and difficult to write on. For further technical details, Mr. Clapperton's book on paper-making by hand (**6**), chapter 1, should be consulted.

The style of handwriting, too, is subject to much variation in the course of centuries, and this is of great help in determining the age of any undated document. The characters in the more archaic manuscripts, though quite legible as a rule and differing but little in their actual formation from those of later ages, are less elegantly shaped and look as if they had been traced by a somewhat primitive and stubby sort of brush. Towards the end of the sixth century a marked change becomes apparent, corresponding no doubt to some increase of flexibility in the writing instrument. In the Sui dynasty and during the first hundred years or so of the T'ang, when the art of paper manufacture was so highly developed, penmanship also reached its peak of perfection. The copying of *sūtras* was always entrusted to the most skilful scribes, and the grace and regularity of their handiwork are very pleasing to the eye. But fewer and fewer *sūtras* were copied as time went on, and just as the quality of the paper grew worse in the eighth century, so the standard of penmanship steadily declined. With but few exceptions the scripts become careless, clumsy, and inaccurate. This is all the more regrettable because the secular texts, which naturally interest us most, are practically confined to the two or three centuries that followed.

And now the short but pleasantly varied Taoist section remains to be considered. This may be divided up under the following heads: (1) Imperial preface to the Taoist Canon (one copy); (2) *Tao tê ching*[40] (15 copies, none complete, but between them comprising all the eighty-one chapters except

nos. 1, 2, and part of 3); (3) *Lieh Tzŭ*[41] and *Chuang Tzŭ*[42] (a few fragments only); (4) *Sūtras* (51 items, most of which are not in the present Canon, and a large number of unidentified fragments); (5) Taoist ritual; (6) Prayers and charms; (7) Divination; (8) Medicine; (9) Calendars. Taoism was in the ascendant during the first half of the T'ang dynasty, the rulers of which claimed descent from the ancient sage Lao Tzŭ,[43] though it suffered a little set-back under the more Buddhistically inclined Empress Wu. All the so-called "*sūtras*" (to borrow a convenient Buddhist term) probably date from this period. One of the colophons (S. 3135) may be quoted as an example of the slavishness with which the devotees of this bogus religion aped the ideas and phraseology of their Buddhist rivals: "On the 22nd of the third moon of the third year of I-fêng [18th April, 678] the female official of the Three Profundities, Kuo Chin-chi,[44] reverently caused a section of the *Pên chi ching*[45] to be copied on behalf of her deceased Preceptor, in order that he might be helped and benefited by the resultant stock of surpassing merit, praying that his path might coincide with that of the Nine Immortals, and that his spirit might travel to the Eight Blessed Regions." It must be explained that the Taoist Canon falls into three main divisions called "Grottos" or "Profundities," corresponding to the three Buddhist *Piṭaka*: Profound Purity, Profound Mystery, and Profound Spirituality. It is interesting to find a group of Nine Immortals mentioned instead of the familiar Eight. Under the Sung dynasty their cult appears to have been widespread, and we learn from another source that one of the Nine was supposed to have been one-eyed, while the other eight were totally blind. The eight blessed regions form a counterpart to the Buddhist Pure Land or paradise. The *Wu shang pi yao*[46] (*Secrets of Supreme Importance*), of which a very small portion has been preserved in S. 80, is an enormous Taoist miscellany which Père Wieger describes in his Index (**33**) as "un amas informe d'ineptes balivernes." Here is the colophon: "On the 8th of the second moon of the sixth year of K'ai-yüan [14th March, 718] this *sūtra* was reverently copied as an act of worship to the order of Ma Ch'u-yu,[47] priest of the Shên-ch'üan (Divine Spring) Monastery[48] at Tunhuang Hsien in Sha-chou,[49] and his nephew the Taoist priest Ma Pao-i,[50] on behalf of their deceased ancestors in seven previous incarnations, the parents that begot them, and all the living beings of the universe." Although the transmigration of souls is in no sense a Taoist doctrine, we see that it has been duly assimilated. On the other hand, it would appear that Taoist priests or monks still retained their own names instead of adopting religious appellations like the Buddhists.

As time went on, Taoism incorporated in itself all manner of popular usages and superstitions, as well as a few useful arts. Hence the inclusion in this section of texts on divination, medicine, and the calendar, some examples of which may now be given. One of the longer rolls (S. 3326) contains twenty-five drawings of differently shaped masses of vapour, with explanatory text beneath (*v.* PLATE III): "Whenever a white vapour of this shape appears in any common man's dwelling, on its dispersal there will be grave illness. If its colour is blackish and it envelopes the house, the members of the family will perish in war, or the house itself will be destroyed.

Whenever in a man's house or garden there is a vapour in the shape of a wolf or tiger, prancing or squatting on the ground, one of the sons will become a general, or be created a duke or marquis in less than three years' time.

A red vapour shaped like human bones under a cover indicates that the old grave of a royal personage lies beneath. Care should be taken not to collide with this vapour, or death will ensue within three years."

Other treatises deal with divination from the sixty-four hexagrams, *fêng-shui*[51] or geomancy, signs and portents, astrology, the interpretation of dreams, bodily peculiarities, and so forth.

Medical science is represented by various fragments on anatomy, with diagrams, treatises on the pulse, lists of prescriptions, etc. Perhaps the most interesting item is a series of notes on the medicinal value of certain fruits and other articles of diet (S. 76 v°). Some queer facts are brought to light. For instance, "the juice expressed from the pounded leaves of a water-melon will, if rubbed on the scalp, cause hair to grow where none was before." And "the seeds and root of the lotus plant, if eaten after being stored for a thousand years, will prevent hunger and so etherealize the body that it is able to fly in marvellous fashion." This fragment is believed to be an early forerunner of the famous sixteenth-century herbal *Pên ts'ao kang mu*.[52] It has been discussed at length by Dr. Nakao in a Japanese scientific journal (**20**).

Calendar-making was another activity which the Taoists seem to have made particularly their own, for the Buddhist calendars already mentioned are simply lists of fast-days for the remission of sin, whereas the primary object of an ordinary Chinese calendar is to foretell good or bad luck on certain days. One of the two complete calendars in the Collection (S. 95) is dated 956, and comprises 354 days in all, there being no intercalary moon for that year. The introductory portion includes a diagram of mysterious import showing the names of colours arranged in the form of a square and

connected with the points of the compass. There is also a table for the location of the human spirit or vital principle on each day of the month: on the 1st, it is in the great toe; on the 2nd, in the ankle; on the 3rd, in the thigh, and so on. Wherever it happens to be, no blood-letting by means of acupuncture or cautery should take place in that part of the body. In the calendar itself each day is noted as being propitious for something or other, whether it be sacrificing, getting married, or cutting one's finger-nails. It is surprising to find every seventh day marked with the character, read *mi*,[53] which means honey, but must here, I think, stand for the first syllable of Mithras, the Persian Sun-deity. We know that in the mystery religion connected with his name each day of the week was devoted to the adoration of a special planet, and that the day of the Sun was the most sacred of all. In an incomplete calendar for 978 (S. 612) the most striking feature is a group of finely executed drawings representing the Year-star God (the planet Jupiter) seated in the middle and surrounded by figures of the twelve " great spirits " and the four Lokapālas, guardians of the four quarters of space. Each of the former is wearing as a head-dress one of the twelve animals of the duodenary cycle (rat, ox, tiger, hare, dragon, serpent, horse, goat, monkey, cock, dog, boar), and eight of them carry ceremonial tablets in their hands (PLATE IV). There are also two printed calendar fragments which will be described further on.

The two Manichaean texts are of great importance for the study of a religion which flourished in parts of China for many centuries. The first[54] (S. 2659) is contained in a long roll made of thin, soft paper, dating probably from the eighth century, and consists of a number of hymns translated into Chinese from the Pahlavi original by one Tao-ming,[55] perhaps the monk of that name who helped Hsüan-tsang with his translation of the *Ten Wheels Sūtra*.[56] The hymns relating to Jesus have been translated into German (**28**), and a complete English translation by C. Ts'ui is now in preparation. The other Manichaean roll (S. 3969) contains only the first four chapters of *A Compendium of the Religion of Mani, Buddha of Light*,[57] which was first translated into Chinese in 731. The evidence of paper and handwriting makes it probable that this was one of the earliest copies. A further fragment of the roll is in the Paris Collection, and was published with translation in *Journal Asiatique* (**4**, 105–116). The complete text has since been published in the *Taishō Tripiṭaka* (**25**, LIV, 1279–81).

The Confucian Classics are represented in much the same proportion as the Taoist. There are only small fragments of the *Book of Changes* and the *Record of Rites*, but a good many rolls containing parts of the other

three classics. Although none is dated, a dozen or more may be referred to the seventh century, and one at least—a well-spaced manuscript of the *Book of Songs*—to the sixth. The longest is a fine 13½-foot roll of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* with the *Tso Chuan* and commentary by Tu Yü.[58] From the *Confucian Analects* there are eighteen pieces, and from the *Book of Filial Piety* nine, two of which are nearly complete, and three bear dates which work out as 876, 925, and 943. The colophon of the 925 roll (S. 707) was written by the hand of Ts'ao Yüan-shên,[59] who afterwards became King of Tunhuang. Besides these, there is a good bold copy of the *Family Sayings of Confucius*, section 30, a small fragment of *A New Collection of Extracts from the Nine Classics*,[60] and another fragment of a treatise dealing with classical literature in general.

The rest of the Stein Collection consists of a great variety of secular documents, mostly dating from the tenth century, though some go back to the eighth. During a remarkable gap of forty-five years in the first half of the ninth century, when the Tibetans were dominant in the Tunhuang region, not a single dated text occurs; then came the pro-Chinese revolution led by Chang I-ch'ao,[61] after which Tunhuang was officially known as Kuei-i Chün, " Military district brought back to allegiance,"[62] and was governed successively by members of two families, the Chang and the Ts'ao, under the nominal suzerainty of China. A more or less complete list of these rulers, who soon assumed the title of King, with such information as I could gather about each reign, will be found in **12**, 566–571.

The historical manuscripts are disappointingly few in number, but miscellaneous in character. Two badly mutilated fragments from the *Ch'un ch'iu hou ch'in yü*,[63] a lost work by K'ung Yen[64] of the fourth century, deal with the later years of the Ch'in dynasty, from 212 to 207 B.C. There is a very fine copy of the *Han History*, chapter 78, containing biographies of the Hsiao[65] family. *Li tai fa pao chi*[66] (S. 516), a record of Buddhism in China from A.D. 60 to 774 written in opposition to the Dhyāna, meditative or intuitional school, is preserved practically entire in a roll 45 feet long. A summary of events from 720 to 754 is written on the back of a Taoist *sūtra* and there is a semi-poetical account of Chang I-ch'ao's campaign against the Tibetans in which the following passage occurs: " The reconquest of Tunhuang and Chin-ch'ang[67] having been completed, it was now the second year of Ta-chung (A.D. 848)." According to the standard histories, it was not until 851 that Chang I-ch'ao made his formal submission to the Throne. It is tantalizing to find a short history of Kua-chou[68] and Sha-chou (another name for Tunhuang) of which only the preface and five columns

at the beginning remain, bringing us no further than the Later Han dynasty. And a booklet containing an explanation of terms occurring in historical works is also incomplete. This has the enigmatic title *Ying chin*[69] or *Safe-gold*, derived from a proverb in the *Han History*: "It is better to bequeath a single book to your children than a safe full of gold."

The section on Topography is even less extensive, but two or three items are of considerable interest. A small brochure entitled *Tun-huang lu*[70] (S. 5448) gives an account of the most remarkable sights to be seen in the surrounding country (*v.* **13, 14, 16**). Here is a short description of the cave-temples visited by Stein a thousand years later: "In this valley there is a vast number of old Buddhist temples and priests' quarters; there are also some huge bells. At both ends of the valley north and south, stand temples to the Rulers of the Heavens, and a number of shrines to other gods; the walls are painted with pictures of the Tibetan kings and their retinues. The whole of the western face of the cliff for a distance of 2 *li*, north and south, has been hewn and chiselled out into a number of lofty and spacious sand-caves containing images and paintings of Buddha. Reckoning cave by cave, the amount of money lavished on them must have been enormous. In front of them pavilions have been erected in several tiers, one above another. Some of the temples contain colossal images rising to a height of 160 feet, and the number of smaller shrines is past counting. All are connected with one another by galleries, convenient for the purpose of ceremonial rounds as well as casual sight-seeing." Another passage describes the Hill of Sounding Sand,[71] which is said to be 10 *li* from the city and to reach a height of 500 feet in places (the Chinese foot at that date was considerably shorter than ours): "The whole mass is made up entirely of pure sand. This hill has strange supernatural qualities. Its peaks taper up to a point, and between them there is a mysterious hole which the sand has not been able to cover up. In the height of summer the sand gives out sounds of itself, and if trodden by men or horses the noise is heard many tens of *li* away. On the day of the Dragon festival it is customary for men and women from the city to clamber up to some of the highest points and rush down again in a body, which causes the sand to give forth a loud rumbling sound like thunder. Yet when you come to look at it the next morning the hill is found to be just as steep as before." This curious phenomenon is still observable at the present day. According to Stein, his Chinese secretary "could not forgo the temptation of climbing to the top of the huge dune in his dainty velvet boots, just to make the sand slide down from there and hear the 'miraculous rumbling' it pro-

duced." The fact that both sexes joined in this sport throws an interesting sidelight on the position of women in this outlying community. Incidentally it proves that foot-binding could not have been in vogue, even if the women were Chinese, which is perhaps doubtful.

Another short text (S. 367), unfortunately imperfect and lacking a title, goes further afield and follows the "southern route" from Tunhuang as far as Charchan, after which it doubles back to the oasis of Hami and the neighbouring territory. It is more business-like than the *Tun-huang lu*, being less concerned with marvels and more with mileage (**8**). The colophon is dated the 2nd February, 886. There is also a topographical fragment (S. 788) which describes part of the same region as the *Tun-huang lu* (**12**). It retells the story of the water-dragon which had to be appeased by the annual sacrifice of victims, and was finally slain by a resolute Governor. What this ancient counterpart of our Loch Ness monster can have been must be something of a puzzle to our zoologists, for no species of saurian reptile appears to have been observed in those parts. In this fragment, too, we come across the name of Lo-tsun,[72] the Buddhist priest who is said to have begun the construction of the Mo-kao[73] grottos, afterwards called Ch'ien-fo-tung, in A.D. 366. No other reference to him has yet been found in the Stein MSS. Two itineraries may also be mentioned—one from the eastern capital (probably Lo-yang) along the great northern highway to India; the other is the diary of a monk's pilgrimage from the northern capital (T'ai-yüan Fu) to Wu-t'ai Shan.

The most popular item in the Poetry section is the *Ch'ien tzŭ wên*,[74] or *Thousand-character Essay*, which was used until quite recently as a primer for Chinese school-children. An emperor of the sixth century is said to have taken a thousand different characters at random from the work of a famous calligraphist and then asked the scholar Chou Hsing-ssŭ[75] to make a poem out of them without using the same character twice. Chou Hsing-ssŭ completed the task in a single night, producing 250 lines of four words each, but the effort turned his hair white. There are two complete copies of this poem in the Collection, besides several fragments. After the title we read: "Rhymes arranged, in obedience to command, by the *yüan-wai san-ch'i shih-lang*[76] Chou Hsing-ssŭ." There is also an adaptation of the poem, hitherto unknown (S. 5961), by one Chung Shu,[77] who inserts two extra characters in each line. In a prefatory stanza it is stated that "The *yüan-wai* arranged the words and ordered the rhymes, Forming a continuous string of pearls and jade; The *san-ch'i* has left a name which will never grow dim; The *shih-lang* will be lauded in the songs of ten thousand generations."

Next we come to several examples of the narrative ballad, which is the nearest approach to an epic in Chinese literature. *Cho chi pu ch'uan wên,*[78] *Story of the capture of Chi Pu,* celebrates the exploits of a popular hero who fought for the Ch'u State in the civil wars that followed the disruption of the Ch'in empire (**31**). In the cold light of history he must be regarded as the very type of a swashbuckler; but at any rate he possessed the redeeming virtue of loyalty to his cause in spite of overwhelming disaster. According to a current proverb, Chi Pu's pledged word was worth more than a hundred catties of gold; and this is a quality that has always appealed strongly to the Chinese. Of the five copies that survive one is complete (S. 5441), but its text is very corrupt and the handwriting extremely bad. The full title given here is *Poetical composition telling how the Ch'u general Chi Pu, storming on the field of battle, put the Prince of Han to shame, and made the Imperial ministers turn their horses and withdraw the army, in the 3rd year of the Great Han dynasty* [204 B.C.]. Appended are two passages towards the close of the ballad:—

" Chi Pu, hearing of his sovereign's wrath,
And driven to despair because his life was at the mercy of all,
Could only lament that no refuge was left for him in all the world,
And everywhere, under the expanse of heaven and in the confines of earth,
trembled to meet his fellow-men.
So he fled into a deep valley of the Li mountain
Where, grasping at life and shunning death, he lay in hiding.
By night he snatched sustenance from neighbouring hamlets,
But at dawn he retired into the forest to keep company with wild beasts . . ."

However, all came right in the end: Chi Pu gave himself up and threw himself upon his enemy's mercy, which fortunately for him was not strained.

" The Emperor upon his throne gave ear to this appeal.
His anger turned to joy, and he received his old enemy in friendship.
' I will have compassion on thee,' he said, ' despite thy many schemes of
robbery.
Let no more heed be paid to ancient grudges.
I will bestow upon thee embroidered silks and precious stones,
Raise thee up to be Prince of Ch'i-chou,
And let thee return, nobly clad, to the home of thy ancestors,
Where thy kinsfolk shall enjoy splendid honours and emoluments.' "

Perhaps the most romantic discovery among the Tunhuang MSS. is a poem of 238 lines entitled *Ch'in fu yin,*[79] *The Lament of the Lady of Ch'in.* Through the mouth of a lady of the Palace, who may or may not be fictitious, it describes the sack of Ch'ang-an,[80] the capital of the T'ang dynasty on the site of the present city of Sian, by the rebel leader Huang Ch'ao[81] in 881. There are three copies in the British Museum, all defective, and a small fragment. One of the copies (S. 692) has a note at the end which tells us that it was made in 919 by a novice attached to a Buddhist monastery in Tunhuang. After this the scribe, apparently smarting under a sense of injustice, breaks into verse on his own account. I give a free translation:

" Now I have made this copy fair,
Five pints of good wheat should be mine;
But wheat's so dear that in despair
I must my secret hopes resign."

The rest of this plaintive effusion is torn off. There are also two copies of the poem in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, one of which is complete and dated as early as 906, when the poet was still alive. Thanks to this fortunate circumstance and the kindness of Professor Pelliot, who copied out for me the eighteen lines that were missing in the London copies as well as a number of variant readings, I was able to prepare a revised text which may be taken to represent the poem very nearly as it left the hands of its author (**10**). But who was this author? His name, Wei Chuang,[82] appears in one of the Paris copies, and is that of a well-known poet and statesman. Prior to the discovery of the Tunhuang manuscript it was known that, as a youthful graduate, he had composed a ballad of this name which, because it contained some indiscreet expressions that gave offence in high quarters, was excluded from the collected edition of his works. Thus the text was lost and gradually forgotten, only to come to light again a thousand years after his death! Wei Chuang appears to have been sitting for an examination in the capital at the time when it was captured by the rebels; certainly his description of the scenes of horror during the sack of the city seems to reflect the memories of an eye-witness.

The story begins with a chance meeting between the poet and the lady, " reclining in solitude beneath the shade of the green willows. Her phoenix head-dress was awry, and a lock of hair lay athwart her temples. Her face showed traces of care, and there was a pucker between her eyebrows."

She proceeds to pour out a tale of woe and despair, commencing with the encirclement of the doomed city by the rebel army:—

" Supporting the infirm and leading children by the hand, fugitives are calling to one another in the turmoil :
Some clamber on to roofs, others scale walls, and all is in disorder . . .
Our northern neighbour's womenfolk, trooping all together,
Dash wildly about in the open like stampeding cattle.
Heaven and earth shake with the rumbling of chariot wheels,
And the thunder of ten thousand horses' hoofs re-echoes from the ground.
Fires burst out, sending golden sparks high up into the firmament,
And the twelve official thoroughfares are soon seething with smoke and flame."

After the fate of four unhappy girls has been recounted, we have a description, not untouched by humour, of her own ruffianly captors:—

"Their hair is unkempt, their faces begrimed, their eyebrows shaggy and red,
So that when I turn my eyes upon them I can hardly endure the sight.
Their clothes are put on all awry, the language they speak is strange;
With overweening pride in their prowess, they write characters as though with a chisel . . .
In their close-cropped hair they would fain stick ornamental hairpins,
Without troubling to take off their Court robes they roll themselves in embroidered coverlets.
Clutching their ivory tablets upside down, they masquerade as Ministers of State,
With the golden fish at their girdles the wrong way up, they play the part of Court officials.
In the morning I hear them entering the Audience Chamber to present their memorials,
But in the evening one sees them brawling as they throng to the wine tavern."

Then the aftermath: a doleful picture of the once magnificent city after the storm had passed:—

" Ch'ang-an lies in mournful stillness: what does it now contain?
—Ruined markets and desolate streets, in which ears of corn are sprouting.

Fuel-gatherers have hacked down every flowering plant in the Apricot Gardens;
Builders of barricades have destroyed the willows along the Imperial Canal . . .
All the pomp and magnificence of the olden days are buried and passed away;
Only a dreary waste meets the eye: the old familiar objects are no more.
The Inner Treasury is burnt down, its tapestries and embroideries a heap of ashes;
All along the Street of Heaven one treads on the bones of State officials."

Such things are brought home to us with peculiar poignancy in these days of air-raids and bombing. The rest of the poem is mostly taken up with a journey through the ruined countryside, and the heart-rending story of a once wealthy land-owner now reduced to starvation and beggary. At the close, a contrast is drawn between all this misery and the peaceful state of the distant province of Kiangnan which had escaped the rebel invasion.

Among several other narratives in verse, one is based on the tragic story of Han P'êng[83] in the fourth century B.C. (S. 2922). The Prince of Sung, having seized his beautiful wife, cast him into prison where he committed suicide. The wife flung herself down from the top of a tower, leaving a letter in her girdle in which she asked to be buried with her husband. This the enraged tyrant refused; but from their adjacent graves there sprang up two trees whose roots and branches intertwined, while a pair of birds sang a song of lamentation morning and evening over their remains. Tung Yung[84] of the Han dynasty, who afterwards became one of the twenty-four examples of filial piety, is also commemorated in a poem of some length (S. 2204). A favourite subject for versification is found in the successive stages of human life. The *Wistful Poems of a Centenarian*,[85] for instance, deal with the ages of 11, 22, 33, and so on, finishing up with 99 and 100 (S. 1588). *The Ballad of the Swallow*,[86] in irregular metre, is a political satire cast into the form of a quarrel among birds (S. 214).

In a class by themselves are a number of didactic poems on the right conduct of life. Prominent among these is a long series of precepts by the Brahmacārin Wang[87] (S. 5541) and a sequel by one Fan Fu-ch'uan[88] (S. 3393), which lend themselves to easy quotation:—" You may pile up a mountain of riches, but you will only have a coffin when you die." " If you wish for filial sons and grandsons, your teaching must be

enforced by physical correction: every day should witness a thousand beatings, and wrongdoings should be met with stern rebuke. To bring up a child, begin beating him from an early age, and don't let pity prevent you from using the cane. If he deceives his parents when grown up, you will certainly repent too late of your lenience."—This is King Solomon with a vengeance! " Poor kinsfolk you should do your utmost to help, but avoid troubling your rich relations. If you know the taste of thyme-honey, what need to add further to its sweetness? "—The connection here is not obvious; but I take the meaning to be: if you have enough money to enable you to enjoy simple pleasures, why try to get more? " When you are told a secret, pray do not blurt it out; if you hear gossip, it should not be repeated. When you see trouble, make as though you saw it not; ever beware of taking too much upon yourself. Do not stand security for those who are not relations; do not act as go-between where you have no business; for although you may disappoint a fellow-townsman, you will be free from calamity as long as you live." " Once you know you are on the right road, you can travel a thousand *li* without going astray." The orthodox Buddhist peeps out in the following couplet: " Besottedness is the retribution that falls on the wine-drinker: he is like a man who has fallen into a cesspool." And in the closing quatrain: " Evil courses must one and all be renounced, and virtuous principles not violated: whoso with wise heart seeketh the Good Law, to him it shall surely be given to behold the Tathāgata."

Somewhat similar to the above, but more jocose in character, is a set of doggerel verses entitled *Newly collected Teachings of a Father*[89] (S. 4307), with two constantly recurring refrains: " Just do what your father tells you " and " Circumspection is indeed best." Here is a specimen: " If you encounter a drunken man on the footpath, clear out into the roadway. When he has passed, you may come back again: circumspection is indeed best! " Another work of the same kind, but with four words to the line instead of five, giving a more staccato effect, is *The Family Teachings of T'ai Kung*[90] (S. 4920): " Do not bend another man's bow; do not ride another man's horse: if the bow breaks or the horse is killed, beyond doubt you will have to make good the loss." " The bird that is caught in the net regrets that it didn't fly higher; the fish that swallows the hook is sorry that it didn't go hungry." " When the father goes out for a walk, the son should follow behind. If on the road you meet a man of high standing, put your feet together and draw your hands into your sleeves; if he gives you wine, you must accept it on your knees; if he gives you meat, don't throw the bones to a dog." " The way to bring up a son is not to let him use strong

PLATE I.—First Court in the Underworld

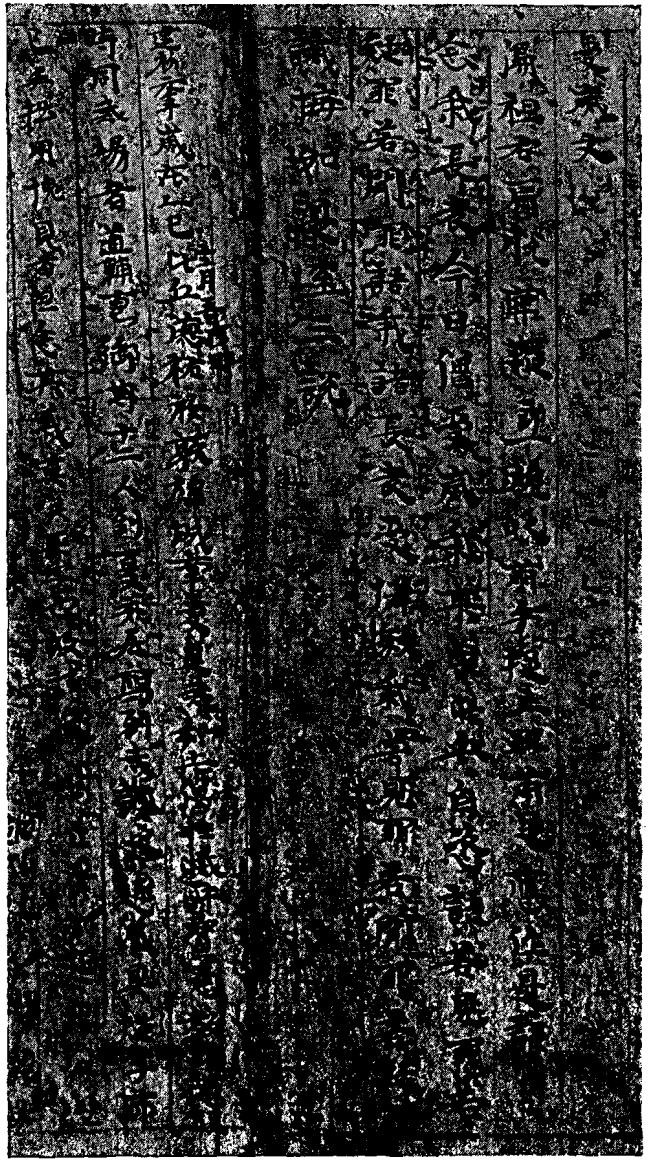

PLATE II.—End of a Vinaya text dated 406

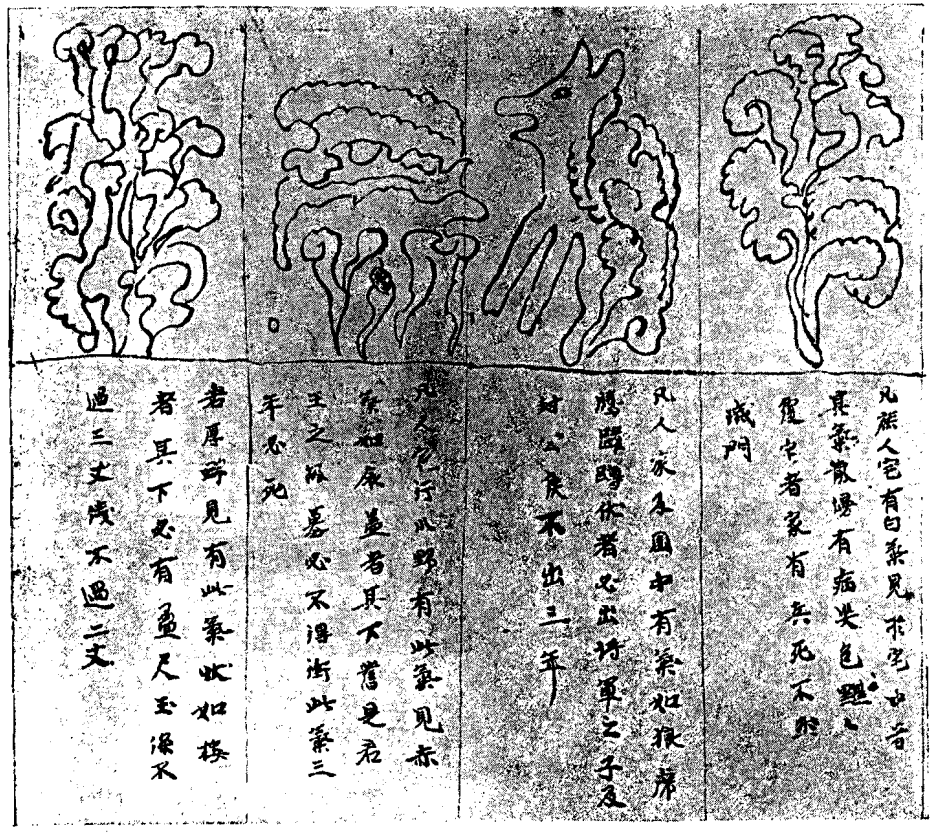

PLATE III.—Divination from Vapours

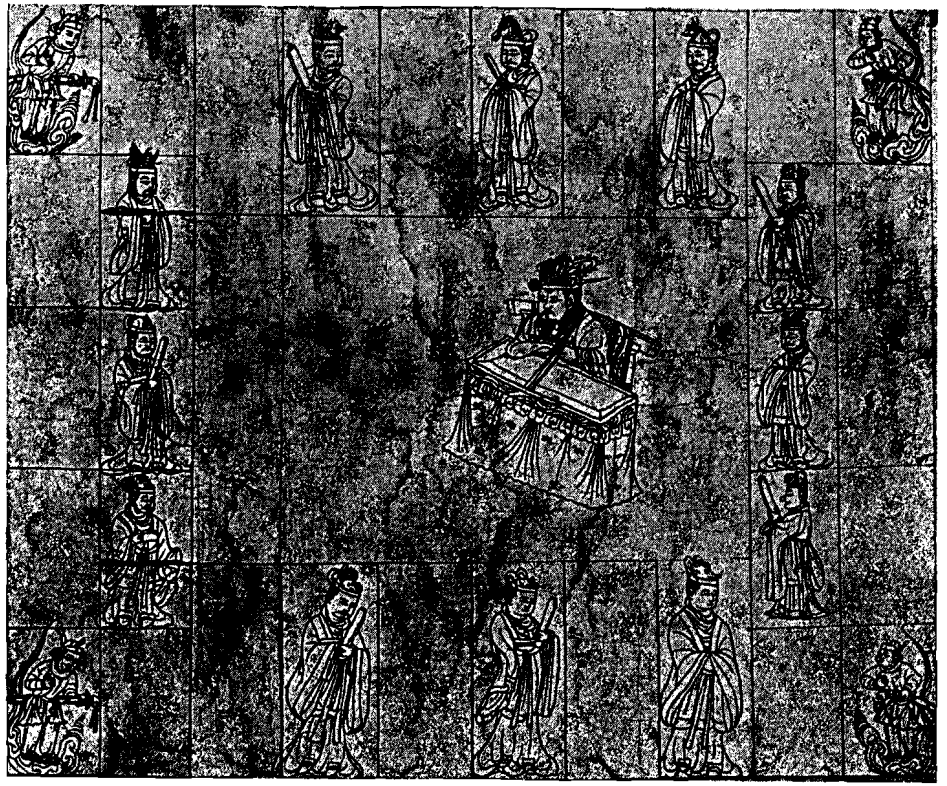

PLATE IV.—Illustration to Calendar for 978

PLATE V.—Debate between Tea and Wine

PLATE VI.—Census of Tunhuang (fragment)

PLATE VII.—Printed Prayer-sheet of 947

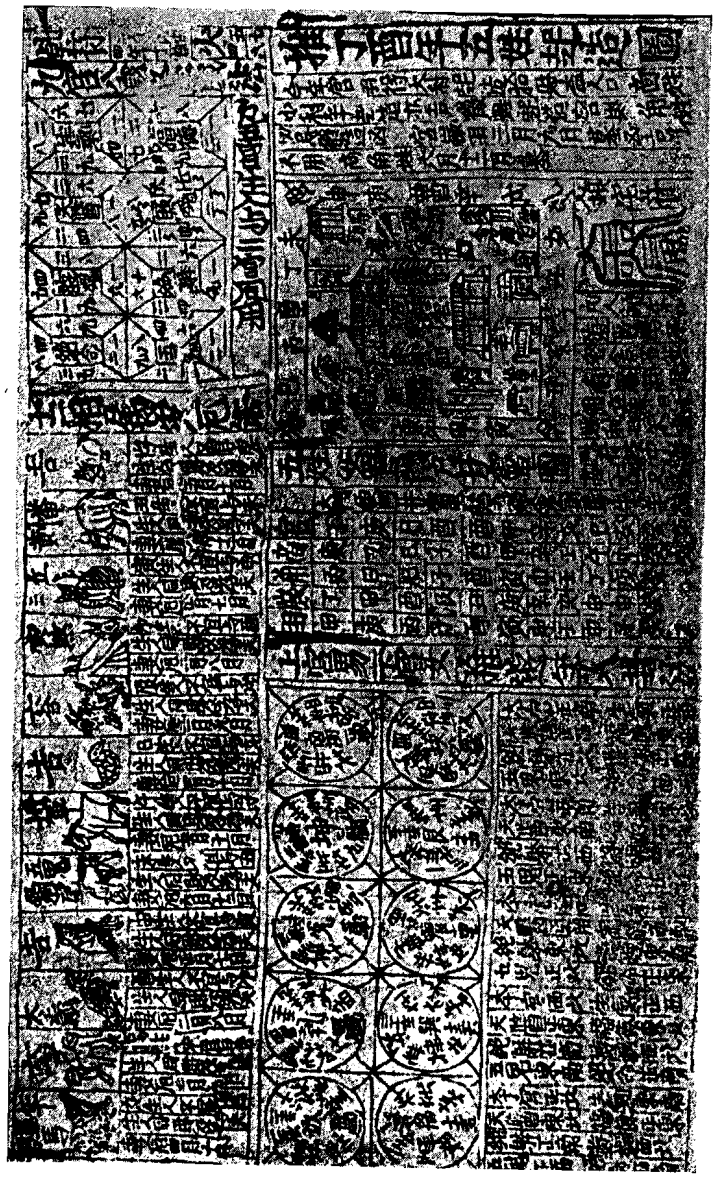

PLATE VIII.—Part of Printed Calendar for 877

language; the way to rear a daughter is not to let her leave her mother's side. When your son grows up, do not allow him to get fond of wine; when your daughter grows up, do not allow her to go gadding about." There is another lost work with the same title, which consists of answers given by the sage to questions asked by his royal master Wu Wang.[91] The portion of it that has survived (S. 479) is almost wholly concerned with numerical categories such as the five deadly sins, the six inauspicious things, etc. A note at the end reads: " Threefold recitation recorded by the student Lü K'ang[92] on the 28th of the first moon of the sixth year of Ch'ien-fu " [22nd February, 879].

Besides the longer pieces, there are numerous songs and scraps of verse by both monks and laymen. Here is a short extract from a poem of a reflective nature (S. 5474) which recalls Juvenal's line " Cantabit vacuus coram latrone viator ": " Life is full of pain and suffering, And best of all is to die early. Other men may laugh at my poverty, Yet in my poverty I rejoice exceedingly: Possessing neither horses nor oxen, I dread not being despoiled by robbers."

Works of fiction do not bulk large in the Stein Collection, but there are a few batches of short stories of which the *Sou shên chi*,[93] *Investigations into the Supernatural*, is the most noteworthy from a literary point of view (**1, 2**). Nine complete stories and the beginning of a tenth are contained in a roll about 10 feet long (S. 525). The end portion has been torn off, and it is impossible to say how much is missing. I have fully discussed elsewhere (**11**) the relation of this text to the two existing compilations of the same name, and will therefore merely reproduce from this MS., in condensed form, a queer tale which does not appear in either:—" A farmer named Hou Shuang[94] was frequently disturbed, while at work in his fields, by the wailing sound of a human voice. This continued for over two months, until at last he discovered in the corner of a field the skeleton of a man protruding from the soil, with blades of corn growing out of the eye-sockets. He hastened to give it decent burial, and after that the wailing ceased. After the harvest, he was returning home one evening when he perceived the figure of a man closely dogging his footsteps. Somewhat surprised, he accosted the stranger and asked who he was.—' I am a disembodied spirit,' replied the latter.—' The ways of the living and the dead lie apart,' said Hou Shuang; ' why are you following me thus? '—' Alas,' said the spirit, ' I have received a great kindness at your hands, and have no worldly goods with which to repay you. But I hear that you are not yet married, and I think I can help you to a wife.' He then named a certain day, and told

Hou Shuang to make all the usual preparations for a wedding. When the day came, the bridegroom's family was much puzzled at the non-appearance of the bride; but during the afternoon a heavy black rain-cloud drifted up over the house, shrouding everything in darkness. Hou Shuang went up into the bridal chamber, and there he found a damsel of about eighteen or nineteen with all her trousseau complete!—' Who are you, Sir,' she said, ' that intrude here? ' Hou Shuang retorted: ' What are *you* doing in my room? ' Then the young lady told him that she was the daughter of the Governor of Liao-hsi, and that she was going to be married to the Governor of Liao-tung. ' This morning,' she said, ' I had just reached my future husband's threshold when a great whirlwind sprang up. I got out of my chair to see better, and was whisked back to my own room. This is my house: why do you dispute its possession with me? '—' Liao-tung is 5000 *li* away from here,' said Hou Shuang. ' If you don't believe me, please go outside and look round.' " The upshot was that the girl, finding herself the victim of a miracle, was married to Hou Shuang, and they lived happily ever after. The story concludes with the moral reflection: "If even a disembodied spirit can make such requital for kindness, how much more should living men show their gratitude to the departed by offering sacrifice."

Some thirty or forty humorous anecdotes are recounted in a long roll under the title *Ch'i yen lu*,[95] or *Face-expanding Record* (S. 610), which was copied on the 9th September, 723, and "given by Liu Ch'iu-tzŭ[96] to his second maternal uncle." As the sub-headings " Nimble Wit," " Awkward Situations," and " Scurrilous Jokes " would seem to suggest, the humour is mostly of a Rabelaisian kind. This work does not appear to survive elsewhere, but its title will be found in the list of sources given at the beginning of the *T'ai p'ing kuang chi*,[97] a miscellany of folklore and marvellous tales compiled in 977. In a booklet of the tenth century we find the beginning of a long semi-historical account of the adventures of the Han general Wang Ling (S. 5437), who like Chi Pu took part in the struggle between Hsiang Chi and the future emperor Liu Pang. The whole of it is preserved in one of the Paris MSS. and has been edited with an excellent introduction by Mr. Wang Chung-min[98] (**32**). Another historical romance dealing with the exploits of Wu Tzŭ-hsü[99] about 500 B.C. is contained in a roll 18 feet long, incomplete at both ends, which still awaits further examination (S. 328).

The famous legend of the Cowherd and the Weaving Maiden is touched upon in a badly written fragment (S. 1497 v°) of the tenth century. The actual story is told briefly by a writer of the sixth century as follows: " East

of the Celestial River [the Milky Way] there dwells a weaving maiden [Vega], daughter of the Ruler of Heaven. Year after year she toiled at her loom, weaving the clouds into rich garments for her sire. The Ruler of Heaven took pity on her loneliness, and consented to her being united in wedlock to the cowherd [Altair] on the west side of the River. But after the nuptials, finding that his daughter neglected her weaving, he was angry, and as a punishment made her return to her former station on the east of the River. Only once a year, on the seventh night of the seventh moon, is she now permitted to cross over to meet her lover." (**27**). An addition to the legend is that on that night all the magpies fly up from the earth to form a living bridge over which she may pass. The Stein MS. is not easy to decipher, but a few extracts may be quoted: " Every year, on the seventh evening of the seventh moon . . . with one accord we await the Weaving Maiden, who will to-night come down into the world of mortals. . . . In the second watch we gaze upwards at the dark jade-coloured sky. The moon sheds its light far and wide. . . . The Northern Dipper gradually moves onward in its course. After the sun has set behind the West Mountain, a shooting star flashes past; this we fancy to be the Cowherd. In the third watch the girls gather round their miniature castles [of coloured paper] and bend unceasingly in adoration. When the lamps in front of Buddha's image grow dim, they are replenished with oil, and double or treble obeisances are made. . . . One wonders where the Cowherd is tarrying, and all are anxiously on the watch. . . . In the fourth watch a move is made to the porter's lodge, or out into the street, and lo! a falling star rushes forth to greet us. This is the moment of meeting between the lovers, and now is the time to express all manner of wishes. But those who are unfortunate must not blame Heaven, for all depends on fate. . . ." The well-known story of the Emperor Shun and his stepmother appears in full, as well as other tales illustrative of filial piety. Also the story of Ch'iu Hu[100] who left his family for twenty years, returned incognito, and flirted with his own wife (S. 133 v°). A drama based on this incident is still popular at the present day.

There are only eight items under " Biography," the most important being a series of some hundred anecdotes relating to eminent men (S. 2072), arranged under the following curiously chosen categories: calligraphists, marksmen, conjurors, physiognomists, thought-readers, diviners, oneiromancers, distinguished scholars, diligent students, men of high moral purpose, men of Confucian principles. The sources from which they are taken are duly noted. Three fragments, totalling 8 feet in length, contain biographies taken in abbreviated form from the *Chin History*[101]; the lives and sayings

of eminent men and women appear on the back of a roll; and there is a general account of the Fan[102] family at Tunhuang, with biographies of several of its members.

Among the " Miscellaneous Texts " there are many interesting items. *A Debate between Tea and Wine*[103] (S. 406) is a quaint little *jeu d'esprit* by the provincial graduate Wang Fu,[104] with a short preface. The Museum copy is in a fragmentary condition (PLATE V), but a complete text is to be found in the Paris collection. Here is a translation of the first two speeches; the opening line is quite reminiscent of the toastmaster at a public banquet:—

" *Enter Tea.* (Tea speaks) Ladies and gentlemen, silence please! And hear me speak a little while. Chief of the hundred plants, Flower of the myriad trees, Esteemed for its buds that are picked, Prized for its shoots that are culled, Lauded as a famous shrub—Its name is called Tea! Brought as tribute to the table of princes, Introduced into the home of monarchs, Once presented as a novelty, Its fame has spread over the wide world. Naturally it occupies the place of honour, So what need to extol its merits?

" *Enter Wine.* (Wine speaks) Ridiculous are such claims as these! From of old until now Wine has always ranked higher than Tea.—What cannot Wine singly achieve? It will intoxicate a whole army; It is drunk by the sovereigns of the Earth, And is acclaimed by them as their god. It is quaffed by Ministers of State, And confers the spirit of fearlessness, Making life and death all one: It is instinct with fragrance divine. Give men wine with their meat, And never shall they have an evil thought. Where Wine is, there also will be Benevolence and Righteousness, Propriety and Wisdom. Clearly it deserves the highest honour, For what other beverage can compare with it? "

Tea then takes up the tale again, and so the argument goes on, ding-dong, until at last Water addresses them both and points out that their contest for superiority is really futile, seeing that both Tea and Wine are entirely dependent on the one all-important element of—Water!

The *Ch'i ching*[105] or *Chequers Classic* (S. 5574), which treats of the game usually known as *wei-ch'i*, played with black and white pips on a square board with 361 intersections, is too technical to be translated by anyone but an expert. It is in seven chapters, the first slightly incomplete, with headings of rather obscure import, and " a compendium of critical observations on *wei-ch'i* by the Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty "[106] [502–549]. At the end is the signature of the copyist, a Tibetan monk. Two well-known works, still extant, represented in this section are (1) *Wên hsin tiao lung*,[107] a critical survey of literary forms, in a booklet of twenty-two leaves (S. 5478),

containing Chapters 1 to 14 (out of fifty); this is a neat, semi-cursive MS. of uncertain date. (2) *Wên hsüan*,[108] selected specimens of literature, of which only a fragment of Chapter 18 remains (S. 3663), in good handwriting of the seventh century. A large collection of short extracts from various authors, mostly philosophers (S. 1380), is entitled *Ying chi ch'ao*.[109] It may be noted that the sayings attributed to Lao Tzŭ are not in the present *Tao tê ching*. Longer and minutely classified quotations from all sorts of works, in a very neat hand of the ninth century, fill a roll which is 31 feet long, but torn and incomplete at both ends. The title is *Li chung chieh ch'ao*[110] (S. 1441).

K'ung tzŭ hsiang t'o hsiang wên shu[111] is a dialogue between Confucius and the boy Hsiang T'o, the tradition of which has been preserved independently of our Tunhuang MSS. Confucius is driving out in his carriage when he comes upon some children playing together; with them is this small boy of seven, who however does not join in their games. Asked why he keeps aloof, he replies that games are no good: they lead to quarrels and torn clothes which are not easily mended. Then he goes on building a miniature city wall with potsherds in the middle of the road. Confucius rebukes him, saying: " Why don't you get out of the way of my carriage? " —" Ever since the world began," replies the boy, " it has been the rule for carriages to avoid city walls, not for walls to get out of the way of carriages." Struck by such precocity, Confucius alights and enters into a long conversation with the youngster, who gives acute answers to all the Sage's questions. He is never at a loss: when asked, for instance, if he knows of the existence of fire without smoke, he is able at once to mention the firefly! Quite baffled at last, Confucius drives away, exclaiming to his disciples: " We ought to have a wholesome respect for our juniors; for who knows but that by and by they may prove themselves equal to the men of to-day? " The earliest reference to Hsiang T'o is in the *Shih chi* (*Historical Record*), where it is said that " at the age of seven he became the teacher of Confucius " (**22**, LXXI, 4). It is on this passage, apparently, that the legend was built. There are six copies in the Collection, two of them more or less complete (S. 1392, 5674), but all in poor condition.

Po hsing chang,[112] *A Hundred Chapters on Conduct*, is a collection of moral aphorisms, of which 84 chapters are preserved in one roll and 75 in another (S. 1920, 3491). Each chapter treats of some particular virtue, such as filial piety, diligence, thrift, etc. Other didactic works, all fragmentary, include an essay tendering advice to monarchs, with copious commentary; a dialogue between a scholar and a rhetorician; rules for

correct behaviour while standing, sitting, lying down, etc.; and a short discourse on the proper relations between husband and wife. *T'u yüan ts'ê*[113] is a series of questions like those set for the public examinations, with model answers. One of the copies (S. 614) contains five sub-heads from part 1: Cosmology, Calendar, Fêng and Shan Sacrifices, Punitive warfare against barbarians, and Allotment of land. Another has only two of these, but is furnished with a double-column commentary in which numerous standard works are quoted (S. 1086). Further questions and answers on a variety of interesting subjects are contained in a booklet which, like too many of these MSS., is incomplete at both ends. As a curiosity, too, we may mention a single sheet of moral reflections followed alternately by the words " This is hard to realize " or " Make every effort." Specimens are: " With few desires the heart will be tranquil "; " The lotus-flower springs out of mud "; " Where there is seeking there will ever be pain." The section concludes with two imperfect copies (S. 2658, 6502) of a production of an unusual character. The title has been lost, but it appears to be a discussion of certain prophecies connected with the Chou dynasty proclaimed in 690 by Wu Tsê-t'ien[114] (here called the Spirit Empress Bodhisattva),[115] with the ulterior object of vindicating her usurpation. Considering her strong inclination towards Buddhism, it is rather surprising that the name of the Taoist " Pope " K'ou Ch'ien-chih[116] should occur in this MS., together with other signs of Taoist influence. Though the text is difficult, a translation might shed some light on a remarkable personality and an abnormal political period.

A number of edicts, proclamations, memorials and petitions provide some information as to the conditions prevailing in the Tunhuang area from the seventh to the tenth century inclusive. There is a series of short edicts (S. 1344) ranging in date from 674 to 714 of which the following may serve as an example: " The twenty-seventh day of the seventh moon of the second year of T'ien-shou [26th August, 691]. By Imperial command: whereas among the inhabitants of any municipal borough there may be persons, either male or female, who are offered for sale under the guise of being hired out as labourers, and having no money wherewith to redeem themselves, pass into the absolute possession of the purchaser: such practices are hereby strictly prohibited." More than two centuries later, a certain ruler probably belonging to the Chang family, who styled himself " King of the Realm of Tunhuang in Western Han, holy in his culture and divine in his martial prowess," issued a special order permitting the ten-year-old daughter of one Têng Ch'uan-ssŭ[117] to enter a Buddhist nunnery (S. 1563).

Then we have several purely ecclesiastical documents: one is an exhortation addressed by the metropolitan or " bishop " of Ho-hsi[118] to the monks and nuns of his diocese, which is dated 951 and stamped with three impressions of his official seal (S. 3879).

Among the memorials, we may note a petition from a Nun Preceptress (or as we should say, Mother Superior) to the Bishop for money needed for the repair or upkeep of the Convent buildings (S. 4760); another from the Minister Chang Wên-ch'ê[119] to the Governor concerning the whereabouts and ransom of his nephew, who had been seized by brigands (S. 5394); a question on the subject of certain rights of irrigation from a canal (S. 2103); an appeal for relief made to a charitable association by a poverty-stricken man and his two sons (S. 5698); a complaint about the language and behaviour of a club-member, described as a copyist of foreign *sūtras* (S. 5818); and a request for the return of a donkey lent ten months previously (S. 5864).

There is a large collection of letters and reports, both official and private. More than a third of them are dated. Pride of place must be taken by the copy of a letter from the Emperor Ch'u Ti[120] (942–946) to the Emperor of the Northern (Khitan) dynasty, Yeh-lü Tê-kuang,[121] announcing his predecessor's death (S. 4473). It is significant of the times that he addresses his brother-monarch as an equal. A document of some interest as a record of contemporary events (S. 2589) reports on the political and military situation in north-west China just after the collapse of Huang Ch'ao's rebellion: " The vile bandit Huang Ch'ao has been slain by Shang Jang,[122] who dispatched his head to Hsi-ch'uan [Western Szechwan], where the Emperor received it on his return journey. On the 7th of the tenth moon of the current year [29th October, 884] we entered Ch'ang-an." An official report from the Department for the Presentation of Memorials (S. 1156) records the mission of special envoys to the Chinese Court in order to sue for the insignia of *chieh-tu-shih*[123] on behalf of the Governor of Shachou in 887. A letter from the succeeding Governor to the Bishop of the district (S. 1604) calls attention to the prevalence of plague in the city, which is attributed to negligence on the part of the monks. A reply from the Bishop, dated 902, promises a continuous service of confession and prayer in the establishments under his control, as well as a nightly recitation of a section of the *Buddhanāma Sūtra*. A still later Governor, Ts'ao Yüan-chung,[124] writes four letters in 974 and 975 accompanying donations of cloth and silken fabrics to a temple (S. 5973).

The letters from private persons are often prefaced with an indication as to the state of the weather, which seems to be a common formula. Thus,

we get the following gradations: " First month of spring, still cold. . . . Second month of spring, gradually getting warmer. . . . Third month of summer, extremely hot. . . . First months of autumn, still hot. . . . Second month of winter, bitterly cold." Nowadays the Tunhuang climate is remarkable for its quick changes; for, according to Stein, the temperature on April 1st was 39° below freezing-point, and by April 20th it had already soared to 90° in the shade. A letter written by the princess Chün-chê-chê[125] to her friend, " the lady of the North House, secondary wife of the Ssŭ-k'ung "[126] (S. 2241), bears witness to the dangers of travelling in those parts. The sheet is slightly damaged, but it would appear that the writer is about to start on a journey, and therefore requests her correspondent to acquire " merit " for her by lighting a lamp to burn in the Zoroastrian temple (a certain haziness of religious belief comes out here); but on the principle of " keeping her powder dry," she also asks that an escort of soldiers may be sent to accompany her. Another lady, the mother of a high official, writes to a Buddhist priest whom she addresses as " Kind and Venerable One," begging him to return home (S. 526). No date is given except " intercalary fifth moon," but this limits the choice (if in the tenth century) to 912, 931, 950, 969, or 988.

A few letters deal with literary topics. A student asks his teacher for the explanation of a certain phrase in the *Vimalakīrti-sūtra*[12]; another person, asking for a recommendation, adds this note at the end: " So numerous are the faults in versification that the clever man refuses to indulge in it; so please ignore all tones and rhymes when examining these verses of mine " (S. 811). Somebody else is also doubtful about his " tones ": he makes a list of eight out-of-the-way characters, and asks his " benevolent elder brother " to be so kind as to tell him the tone of each (S. 5778). In a letter to a friend dated 970 (S. 2973) the *chieh-tu ya-ya* and overseer of copyists Ma Wên-pin[127] encloses some verses of his own on a wall-painting, apparently of a tiger among mountains:—

" A rare and precious work of art—this King of Beasts!
For fierce valour and heroic heart unequalled the world over.
His four feet, firmly planted, are like pillars of jade;
His two rows of teeth are sharp as points of steel.
As he stands and looks upon the beetling crags, he seems as fixed as a mountain mass;
But when he moves, his spring will strike terror into the beholder,
Let a mere rumour of his presence be heard by the evil sort,
And which of them will then dare to stir up trouble and calamity? "

The author of this poem is one of sixteen men who a little earlier in the same year, according to another MS. (S. 3540), had taken a solemn pledge to be responsible for the upkeep of the cave-temples in the Tang[128] river valley (these are, of course, the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas). The following passage occurs: " Even if Heaven and Earth collapse, this vow shall remain unshaken. We pray the Two Emperors [Yao and Shun?] to partake in the oath, and beg the Four [Guardian] Kings to bear witness to it." Some not unnatural impatience with the ways of officialdom is shown in four successive notes all asking for instructions as to the disposal of some dead camels (S. 2474 v°). And there is this (S. 5571) from one Têng Liu-ting,[129] who like many of us seems to have had difficulty in collecting his debts: " Whereas on the tenth day of the present moon the wine-seller Têng Liu-ting, when corn was cut on a farm south of the city, supplied a *tui* of wine, and on the eleventh day a carpet as well as a *tou* of wine, he now humbly begs to press for a settlement." And again: " Whereas on the 14th of the present moon I supplied the melon-seller An A-to[130] with one *tou* of wine, I humbly beg to press for a settlement."

Almost as interesting in their way as the actual letters that have survived are the specimens of model letter-writers, giving the correct phraseology for letters addressed to different classes of people on various occasions. Thus we have *Mirror of etiquette for letters*,[131] *Rules for letter-writing between friends*, *Miscellaneous letters of thanks and congratulation*, *A letter-writer for monks*, etc. The longest of these collections (S. 2200), dated 856, is arranged under a number of heads, of which the following remain: (1) Communications of a complimentary nature between fellow-officials; (2) Letters of kind inquiry, etc., to members of the general public; (3) Miscellaneous letters of greeting; (4) Laymen's letters to Buddhist and Taoist monks; (5) Private letters to relatives on the father's or mother's side. Under (3) we find " a letter of apology for a breach of decorum after getting drunk," which may be compared with Charles Lamb's famous letter to Dr. Asbury on a similar occasion, and deserves to be quoted in full: " Yesterday, having drunk too much, I was so intoxicated as to pass all bounds; but none of the rude and coarse language I used was uttered in a conscious state. The next morning, after hearing others speak on the subject, I realized what had happened, whereupon I was overwhelmed with confusion and ready to sink into the earth for shame. It was due to a vessel of small capacity being filled for the nonce too full. I humbly trust that you in your wise benevolence will not condemn me for my transgression. Soon I will come to apologize in person, but meanwhile I beg to send this written communication for your

kind inspection. Leaving much unsaid, I am yours respectfully." A letter to much the same effect which is included in another compilation (S. 5636) elicits the following rather harsh reply: "Yesterday, Sir, while in your cups, you so far overstepped the observances of polite society as to forfeit the name of gentleman, and made me wish to have nothing more to do with you. But since you now express your shame and regret for what has occurred, I would suggest that we meet again for a friendly talk. Respectfully yours." In the same booklet, couched in language so exceedingly abstruse and polite that it is hard to make out the exact meaning, there appears what I take to be an invitation from a football club,[132] with a reply signifying acceptance. It is a pity that the rules of the game (literally, " strike-ball ") have not come down to us; for there is just a possibility that it may not be football but polo. Golf seems definitely excluded.

There are some fifty legal documents in the Stein Collection, of which two are wills in the usual sense, while a third consists of set forms for the distribution of property and the manumission of slaves. In S. 4577, " at the *shên* hour (3.5 p.m.) of the fifth day of the tenth moon of the *kuei-yu* year, Yang Chiang-t'ou[133] bequeaths to his secondary wife Fu-tzŭ,[134] one *po-shih*[135] [literally, ' senior teacher ': I have not the remotest idea what this can be]; also, a wardrobe with mirror inset; also, one cottage [this seems questionable; it may be a wrong character]. To his wife Hsien-tzŭ,[136] one large cooking-pot. [Surely a worse insult than Anne Hathaway's second-best bed.] To Ting-ch'ien,[137] one donkey, one white double-lined jacket, two jade waist-belts. To Ting-nü,[138] one single-gallon cooking-pot. To Ting-shêng,[139] one iron griddle; also, one cupboard." The text of S. 2199 runs thus: " Will of the nun Ling-hui.[140] On the twenty-third day of the tenth moon of she sixth year of Hsien-t'ung [15th November, 865], the nun Ling-hui having suddenly been stricken by illness which becomes worse every day, and fearing the approach of death, hereby declares to her kinsfolk that the dispositions she is making are not the outcome of a wandering mind but of one that is perfectly clear and conscious. Ling-hui only has one servant-girl, born in her household and known as Wei-niang,[141] whom she is leaving to her niece P'an-niang.[142] House or property she has none. Ling-hui trusts that after her decease P'an-niang will provide for the funeral, and that after all the arrangements have been made no other relatives will be allowed to interfere. And lest her verbal instructions made in the presence of her kinsfolk should not be considered trustworthy, she has drawn up this last will and testament with signatures of witnesses to serve as proof." This is followed by the names of ten members of her family,

including a niece who is also a nun, and four male relatives who are monks.

Apart from the above, nearly all the legal documents are contracts of one kind or another, the wording of which conforms to a more or less regular pattern. At the end comes the formula, " for fear that faith should not be kept, the present agreement has been drawn up, to be available as evidence hereafter." Then follow the names of the contracting parties and witnesses. These may be the actual signatures, but more usually they are written by the scribe and attested by the impression of a finger-tip dipped in ink, made by each person concerned. Thus, under one of the names in the nun's will there are two small dots which might escape notice but for the insertion of the characters meaning " finger-print."[143] It must not be imagined that this served any purpose of identification like our modern finger-prints, for the impression is merely a small blob of ink in which no fine lines are traceable; it is comparable rather with the custom of " making one's mark " once practised by illiterates in this country. In many cases, indeed, brush-marks in the shape of a rude cross or the like take the place of finger-marks in these MSS.

S. 5871 is a somewhat mutilated specimen of a contract relating to the repayment of a loan of 17 piculs of grain made by Ch'ien-ying,[144] a monk of the Hu-kuo Monastery,[145] in the seventeenth year of Ta-li [782]. As the Ta-li period lasted only fourteen years, this date shows that the change of year-title was unknown in the Tunhuang district for as long as three years after it had taken place. At the end of the document are seen the names of the borrower, Ho Hsin-yüeh,[146] aged thirty-seven, his wife Ma San-niang,[147] aged thirty-five, and his daughter Ho Ta-niang,[148] aged thirteen, with several finger-marks. He promises repayment in the ninth moon; if he defaults, Ch'ien-ying is authorized to recoup himself from his debtor's livestock. Another contract of the same year (S. 5867), but this time correctly dated as the third of Chien-chung, also relates to the repayment of a debt. The creditor is again the monk Ch'ien-ying, who hardly seems to show the merciful spirit inculcated by his faith; for the debtor Ma Ling-chuang[149] is a novice aged only twenty, who having borrowed 1000 cash binds himself to pay interest at the exorbitant rate of 10 per cent per month. Principal and interest are both to be repayable on demand, and failing this, distraint may be made on Ma's property. Appended are the names of Ma himself, his mother Fan Êrh-niang,[150] aged fifty, and his younger sister Ma Êrh-niang,[151] aged twelve. The above two examples show that it was customary for a married woman to retain her maiden surname.

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The next contract in order of time (S. 5820) records the bartering of " a three-year-old black cow, absolutely unmarked," in exchange for 12 piculs of wheat and 2 piculs of millet, by the nun Ming-hsiang[152] on account of her lack of food and outstanding debts. The other party to the bargain is one Chang Pao-yü,[153] and it is stipulated that the exchange be effected immediately. The date given is the 25th of the intercalary tenth moon of the *wei* year. Intercalary moons after any particular month are so rare that they are most useful in helping to fix a cyclical date. In the present instance the only date within the bounds of probability works out as the 12th December, 803. The unfortunate Ming-hsiang appears again as the vendor of " a first-class ox " in another deed where her age is given as fifty-three (S. 5826). Either party failing to carry out the bargain is to be fined three piculs of wheat. Besides the nun who acts as witness three " guarantors " are mentioned: another nun, aged eighteen, a monk, and a layman. The terms of a few other contracts may be quoted: in 924 a farmer who " lacks able-bodied young men in his own family " hires the services of a labourer from the second to the ninth moon inclusive, and promises to give him by way of payment " a suit of spring clothes with long sleeves and a pair of unlined leather shoes " (S. 1897). Another document places on record a debt of corn and millet which had not been delivered by the appointed date. The defaulter is a monk with the somewhat inappropriate name of Shan-tê[154] (Virtuous Quality) who is described as a " Keeper of Images." One of the last dated MSS. (S. 1946) is a contract made in 991, in which the petty official Han Yüan-ting[155] and his wife agree to sell a slave-girl aged about twenty-eight to Chu Yüan-sung[156] and his family in settlement of a debt of three pieces of raw silk and two pieces of spun silk. It appears to be more in the nature of a loan of services than an actual sale, for it is stated that the debt is repayable within six months. Either party that repudiates the bargain shall forfeit a piece of fine thin silk and two full-grown wethers. This is followed by the names and brush-marks of the girl herself, her two employers, both mistress and master (in that order), an " adviser," and two Buddhist monks as witnesses. Finally, we may notice an agreement as to the constitution and membership of a mutual aid society or club (S. 6005), of which the wording unfortunately is not at all clear.

This brings us to a class of document of which there are over fifty examples in the Collection, mostly copied on the back of *sūtras* or scribbled on other odd sheets. These are circular notices sent out by the committee of a club[157] in order to summon members to a general meeting. Here

is a typical specimen (S. 1453 v°): " Whereas the annual meeting and feast of the Club are now due to be held, all members are requested to attend in response to this circular on the tenth day of the present moon at the gates of the Chieh-chia Hermitage[158] to take their shares as above. [The meaning of this is doubtful.] Those who do not arrive punctually will be fined one beaker of wine, and those who do not come at all will be fined half a jar. This circular is to be transmitted rapidly from hand to hand for the instruction of members, and must not be held up or delayed. From any member who delays the circular a fine will be exacted according to the fixed rules of the Club. When it has completed its round, it should be returned to the Committee to be used as evidence for declaring the fines imposed. Dated the tenth day of the *ping-wu* year, the second of Kuang-ch'i [17th February, 886]. Chang Ch'i,[159] Secretary." There must surely be a mistake in the date here, as one or two days' notice is obviously required. No time is specified for the meeting, but in other circulars 5–7 a.m. is the usual hour. In one case members are convened as early as 3–5 a.m., in others at noon, and once at least during the night. The rendezvous also varies: it may be in any convenient place—at the President's house, near one of the City gates, in the Great Granary, at Ts'ao's wine-shop, or most frequently of all, at the gates of some monastery. These circulars, which are all similar in pattern, seem to point to some sort of mutual benefit association, though the precise object of the meetings is not always apparent. In three instances the reason given is " for the discussion of sundry matters." Another circular is simply a demand for members' contributions in corn. Several bear a heading which seems to indicate a club confined to the members of one family or clan.[160] Some relate to the funeral of a deceased person, when members are instructed to bring with them such offerings as wine, flour, oil, grain, firewood, or lengths of silk. There is a " circular to travellers" (S. 4504 v°), which enjoins the bringing in of bows and arrows, spears, shields, and cudgels, under penalty of seven blows of the bamboo if late, and " official punishment " (whatever that may be) for those who do not come at all; another to the " unattached travellers of Shên-sha Hsiang,"[161] two to a " Society of Brethren," and two to a community of monks. Sometimes the names of the members are appended, to be ticked off with the word *chih*,[162] " noted," or with finger-marks in ink.

My hopes of obtaining a little more light on the aims and objects of these clubs were raised by the discovery of three short MSS. setting forth a few rules for their administration. Two of them, however, proved to be too vague and obscure to help me much. The third is also rather vague, being

more concerned with generalities than with practical details, but it does give us some unexpected information about a special club for women[163] which was established on the 13th February, 959. It opens with a eulogy of friendship:—" Our parents give us life, but friends enhance its value: they sustain us in time of danger, rescue us from calamity. In dealing with friends, a single word may serve as a bond of faith." On feast days, as well as on the day in the first moon set apart for " the establishment of merit," each member of this friendly society has to contribute fixed quantities of oil, wine, and white flour. Much stress is laid on the maintenance of discipline: " If in the club there is anyone who disregards precedence in small things and great, in unruly fashion creates disturbance at a feast, and will not obey the verbal instructions of her superior, then all the members shall repair to the gateway and mulct her of enough wine-syrup for a whole feast, to be partaken of by the rest of the company." A more exact translation of the characters rendered here as " disturbance " would be " hubbub and fisticuffs "[164]—a delightful expression for brawling, though of course it is regrettable that a club composed of women, most of whom appear to have been nuns, should stand in need of any such admonition. But this sounds almost worse: " Any member who wishes to leave the Club shall be sentenced to three strokes with the bamboo "—in addition to the inevitable fine. The names of fifteen members follow (including four office-bearers), each with a distinctive brush-mark: these are executed in so clumsy a fashion as to leave little doubt that none of them could write. The document concludes with a note stating that the rules are designed to be as suitable for members as water is for fishes; that they are to swear by the hills and streams, with the sun and moon as witnesses; and that, as a precaution against bad faith, these rules have been written down to serve as a memorandum for the future.

The next section, though it comprises over 120 separate pieces, need not detain us long. It consists of account notes or memoranda of purchases by various monasteries, with very little to vary their monotony, often scrawled on the back of other manuscripts or on single sheets which are occasionally used as wrappings for *sūtras*. The foodstuffs mentioned are mostly wheat, millet, flour both coarse and refined, bran, beans, wine, and oil. "Yellow hemp" and "hemp refuse" seem to have been much in demand. Other articles are sheepskins, manufactured cloth, shoes, arrows, fans, and pens. A roll about 13½ feet in length (S. 6452) contains memoranda relating to the purchase and consumption of flour, oil, wine, etc., at several monasteries and cave-temples on specified dates. At the beginning

of one fragment we find " a list of people who have borrowed stocks from the granary of the Ling-t'u monastery."[165] Another states that " after checking the store of wine in the presence of the monks on the twenty-sixth day of the eleventh moon of the *chia-shên* year, an amount equivalent to two jars was found to be wanting." Business was conducted largely if not entirely by barter. Thus, in a short account note dated 900 (S. 5800) purchases of silk, paper, and ink are recorded in exchange for " peck-measures " of millet, wheat, and beans. Writing-materials also appear in the following rough memorandum (S. 5790): " Paper, 25 sheets. 50 sheets more. Another 50 sheets. Writing-brushes, 2. Ink [in slabs], 1 catty." Then comes an unexpected entry: " On the 16th of the fifth moon Sung Jung[166] gave a she-ass to Chang [personal name illegible], living at Kua-chou."

Measurements of buildings, rooms, and holdings in land, which I have classed with a few fragments on arithmetic, include one manuscript (S. 4172) which is worth mentioning if only because it bears the latest date in the whole collection. This is a document fixing the boundaries and extent of contiguous pieces of farm land belonging to six different owners on the 3rd February, 995. It appears to be incomplete at both ends, but what remains is so clear that it is possible to reconstruct the relative position of the holdings in a fairly accurate map. Running from south to north along the banks of a main canal on the east, with uncultivated land and salt-pools to the west, they range in extent from 55 to 110 *mou*. At the present day about 6½ *mou* are reckoned to the acre. Among the arithmetical fragments are tables of weights and measures, problems in mensuration worked out, with answers, and a multiplication table going backwards from 9×9 to 1×1.

Most of the remaining MSS. may be classified as lists of one kind or another—lists of characters, proper names, Buddhist works, and so forth. Under the first heading come a large number of dictionaries and vocabularies, the chief items being: (1) the greater part of the *Ch'ieh yün*,[167] believed to be the first Chinese dictionary arranged according to tones and rhymes, and of great value for philological purposes, which for centuries past had been a lost work. The best MS. of this is S. 2071, contained in a roll 34 feet long. In another MS. (S. 2055) only the first nine rhymes of the even upper tone are preserved. It is also entitled *Ch'ieh yün*, but the text is rather fuller than in S. 2071, and Professor Karlgren has suggested that this may really be the *T'ang yün*, which is known to have been based on the earlier work, and which of course would not have been known by that name in

the T'ang dynasty. It has a preface by Lu Fa-yen[168] dated 677. There are also several small fragments, only one of which has a title. (2) *K'ai mêng yao hsün,*[169] *Important Elementary Teaching for the Young,* written in rhymed doggerel of four words to the line, and running to about fourteen hundred words altogether. It begins promisingly enough: "Heaven covers, Earth supports, Sun and Moon shed bright light; the four seasons come and go, the eight periods of the year succeed one another in turn. The flowers of spring display their beauty, the leaves of summer spread out their glory; the thick foliage of the forest falls in autumn, but the pine and bamboo are green in winter." After this, however, the text resolves itself for the most part into a mere enumeration of groups of characters with the same radical, the general object being to provide school-children, in a short space, with as many different characters to be memorized as possible. It closes with this couplet: "O children embarking on your studies, Be quick to learn and slow to forget!" There are eleven copies, most of them fragmentary and none of them complete, but between them containing the whole text. The earliest copy (S. 705) is dated 851, and though brittle and in bad condition it lacks only about a hundred characters at the beginning. (3) *Shih yao tzŭ yang,*[170] *Samples of characters needful on occasion,* a mutilated fragment of a popular vocabulary with very rough clues to the meaning (S. 5731). (4) A much more elaborate work entitled *Chêng ming yao lu,*[171] giving lists of unusual, abbreviated, and incorrect characters; also, pairs of characters similar in meaning, and groups of characters with the same sound and different meaning (S. 388). (5) Part of a pronouncing dictionary arranged under categories (S. 617), thirty-one of which remain. These are of the most heterogeneous description: agriculture, textiles, precious stones, scents and spices, food and drink, domestic animals, boats, and land vehicles, are a few taken at random. The MS. is almost certainly of the sixth century. (6) *Po chia sui chin,*[172] *Golden gobbets from a hundred authors,* a dictionary of poetical phrases arranged under the four tones (S. 6204). At the end are four stanzas praising the work: one is by Wang Chien,[173] a well-known poet of the ninth century, and another contains a mention of the still better-known poet Po Chü-i.[174] (7) Part of a miscellany of names and phrases, with explanation in smaller script (S. 79). The headings that are left all have reference to sex: Marriage, Devotion to wives, Putting away wives and husbands, Handsome men and women, Chaste husbands and wives, Ugly men and women. (8) A complete thesaurus of elegant phraseology suitable for a multitude of topics (S. 2832). This is an excellent manuscript on a roll 41 feet long made of very thin soft paper.

The back of another long roll dated 921 (S. 2614) is taken up with a list of the inmates of nine monasteries and five nunneries, all presumably in or near Tunhuang. The largest monastery has fifty inmates, the largest nunnery one hundred and eighty-nine, and on an average there are four times as many nuns as monks to each institution. Comparing the figures for some of the same monasteries and nunneries officially issued in a report of A.D. 800, we find a great all-round increase in numbers. The monks are classified as (1) those who have taken the full monastic vows; (2) senior novices; (3) junior novices. For women, the classes are (1) fully qualified nuns; (2) *śikṣamāṇas,* who for want of a better term may be called female neophytes; and (3) female novices, senior and junior. There is little in the names to distinguish the sexes except the recurrence of such terms as *hua*[175] (flower) and *miao*[176] (with many shades of meaning from "wonderful" to "lovely"), which are commoner among the nuns, as *chih*[177] (wise) and *shên*[178] (divine) are among the monks. Another list (S. 2669) gives not only the religious name of each nun in certain convents, but her native department, district, and village, her surname, familiar name, and age. Besides these, there are lists of men engaged in repairing the city wall, members of a burial club and of a military police force, owners of land (two of them possessing as little as 10 *mou*), clan names in the Empire, and many others.

A census of inhabitants in the Tunhuang region (S. 113), though only a fragment (PLATE VI), is of special interest because it was taken as long ago as A.D. 416, which is the second oldest date in the Collection (**5, 7**). At that time Tunhuang still formed part of the Western Liang State, which was enjoying considerable prosperity under the enlightened rule of its founder Li Kao.[179] This fragment consists of four odd sheets joined together to make a roll about 3 feet long for a closely written *Lotus Sūtra* commentary on the back. There are entries for ten families, including those of three soldiers, four settlers, and one local official. We will quote the following:—

"Village of Kao-ch'ang[180] in the canton of Hsi-tang[181] district of Tun-huang, prefecture of Tun-huang.

"Lü Chan,[182] settler, aged fifty-six.—His wife, Chao,[183] aged forty-three.—Their issue, a son, Yüan[184] (Eldest), aged seventeen.—Yüan's younger brother Shêng-ma[185] (Horse-breaker), aged seven. Original name, La.[186]—Shêng-ma's younger sister Hua[187] (Flower), aged two.—Adult males: 2.—Boys: [1].—Females: 2.—Total number of individuals: 5.—Residence: Chao Yü's Rampart.[188]—Registered in the first moon of the twelfth year of Chien-ch'u [February–March, 416]."

Chao Yü's Rampart was probably a military cantonment forming part

of the Kao-ch'ang village and surrounded by earthworks which were originally constructed by one Chao Yü. Residence and date are the same in the next two excerpts:—

" Lü Tê,[189] soldier, aged forty-five.—His wife, T'ang,[190] aged forty-one. —Their issue, a son, Ming-t'ien[191] (Bright Heaven), aged seventeen.—Ming-t'ien's younger brother Ai[192] (Love), aged ten.—Ai's younger sister Mei[193] (Charming), aged six.—Mei's younger brother Hsing[194] (Success), aged two. —Adult males: 2.—Boys: 2.—Females: 2.—Total number of individuals: 6."

Note the curious method of enumerating the members of a family, linked as it were in a sort of chain.

" Sui Sung,[195] clerk in head office, aged fifty.—His wife Ts'ao,[196] aged fifty.—Their issue, a son, Shou (Longevity),[197] aged twenty-four.—Shou's wife Chao,[198] aged twenty-five.—[Sui Sung's] elder sister Huang[199] (Imperial), aged seventy-four. Added to the register.—Adult males: 2.—Females: 3. —Total number of individuals: 5."

" Adult males "[200] are those over sixteen, that is, of military age. At sixty-five, or sometimes earlier, a man was exempted from further service. " Added to the register " may imply that Sui Sung's sister was accidentally omitted when it was first compiled, or that she had not yet joined the family at that date. After the death of her husband, if she had no son, the duty of maintaining her would naturally fall to her brother.

There is another much longer roll (S. 613) dating from the fifth century, which contains a census of land and population, though exactly where this was held is uncertain. As in the preceding MS., the sheets have been joined together at haphazard in order that the other side might form a blank roll for a Buddhist text. But the longest of all is S. 514, a 25½-foot roll dealing with the population of I-ho Li,[201] another hamlet in the Tun-huang district, and their holdings in land. The date of the final compilation appears to be 769. A fragment of a census of Kao-ch'ang Hsien[202] (not to be confused with the village in S. 113) is written on a pinkish buff paper which may belong to the seventh century (S. 4682); it was probably taken soon after this kingdom in the Turfān oasis was annexed by China in 640.

The Buddhist works listed are mostly those forming the libraries of certain monasteries. In one MS. dated 964 (S. 2142) we are told that owing to the lack of a catalogue the number of items had been previously unknown. A note at the end states that " the above make a total of 106 bundles of miscellaneous *sūtras* and 60 bundles of the *Ta pan jo*[9] [*Mahā-prajñā-pāramitā*]." One bundle, it may be noted, always consists of ten rolls. Of some importance for students of Buddhism is a roughly classified list of

works in the Canon (S. 2079), which is not dated but is likely to be of the eighth century. Numerous other lists include grades in the Civil Service, train-bands with the names of their officers, crops produced on a farm, registers of various kinds of sheep, family property, sacrificial offerings on behalf of a deceased lady with the strange personal name of Ch'ou-nü[203] (Ugly Woman), and articles of religious and domestic use belonging to monasteries. Among these latter we find the following entries; " two long-handled incense-burners of wrought bronze (one upstairs); one wooden incense-box (broken); one new wooden incense-box (upstairs); three black stone pillows; one bronze bell (hung on a pole); a pair of ' coiled-dragon ' umbrellas embroidered in green; one cooking-pot (in the north store-room); two sheepskin rugs; one embroidered mat (in cupboard)."

Apart from the illustrations to the *Sūtra of the Ten Kings*[16] already noticed, there is little of a pictorial nature in the Stein Collection that calls for comment; but there are some good pen-and-ink drawings above the text on each page of a booklet containing the Kuan Yin chapter[204] of the *Lotus Sūtra* (S. 5642). The large number of paintings that were brought back by Sir Aurel Stein were divided between the British Museum and the Museum of Central Asian Antiquities, Delhi, and now form separate collections. A complete catalogue of these has already been published (**29**).

The printed documents belonging to the same early period as the MSS. are only sixteen in number (excluding ten woodcuts in the Sub-Department of Oriental Prints and Drawings), but correspondingly precious. First of all, of course, comes the famous roll (P. 2), 17½ feet in length, containing the whole of the *Diamond Sūtra*,[205] with a fine woodcut as frontispiece showing Buddha enthroned in the centre and addressing his discourse to an aged disciple, Subhūti, who is kneeling in a corner of the picture. This is the oldest dated specimen of block-printing known to exist, for the colophon runs: " Reverently made for universal free distribution by Wang Chieh[206] on behalf of his two parents on the 15th of the fourth moon of the ninth year of Hsien-t'ung " [11th May, 868].

It is unfortunate that in T. F. Carter's otherwise excellent book *The Invention of Printing in China* (**3**, 41), where this colophon is quoted, two serious mistakes should occur in the translation, which runs; " Printed on 11th May, 868, by Wang Chieh, for free general distribution, in order in deep reverence to perpetuate the memory of his parents." Here Mr. Carter misapprehends the purpose underlying the activity of Buddhist scribes and printers which resulted in the thousands of rolls recovered from Tun-huang. Wang Chieh was actuated by no vague wish to do honour to his

parents' memory. For him it was simply a business proposition: by the reproduction of this holy scripture a certain amount of merit was accumulated, which was to be applied to the reduction of his parents' suffering in any subsequent state of existence, and to expedite them on the path to Nirvāṇa. It can be imagined what a boon the invention of printing must have been to the Buddhist, seeing that it enabled him to accumulate merit on a vast scale with comparatively little trouble or expense.

Mr. Carter's other mistake is in acclaiming Wang Chieh as "the first printer of books of whom the world has record." For the word "made" (*tsao*) does not imply that Wang Chieh was either the block-cutter or in any way concerned with the actual printing. It occurs in many other colophons, where it obviously means no more than "caused to be made or copied." For instance, in 589 an empress is said to have "made all the *sūtras* for circulation;" we can hardly suppose that she copied them all out with her own hand. And again, as we saw on p. 11, the nun Tao-jung was not herself the copyist but "cut down her expenses" so that she could afford to pay for one. All that Wang Chieh did, then, was to give the order and to foot the bill.

The first known printer, or rather block-cutter, is really one Lei Yen-mei,[207] whose name appears as the "artificer" [208] on a printed and hand-coloured prayer-sheet dated 947 (P. 9), showing Kuan Yin with lotus and vase (PLATE VII). The main inscription runs thus: "The disciple Ts'ao Yüan-chung,[124] Governor of the military district of Kuei-i,[62] Inspector for Kua-chou[68] and Sha-chou,[49] Commissioner for the distribution of military land allotments within the sphere of his jurisdiction, and for the suppression of Tibetan tribes, T'ê-chin [specially promoted], additional Grand Preceptor, inaugural Marquis of Ch'iao-chün,[209] ordered this block to be carved for printing, to the end that the city god may enjoy peace and prosperity, that the whole province may be tranquil, that the highways leading east and west may remain open, that evil-doers north and south may be reformed, that diseases may disappear, that the sound of the war-gong may no longer be heard, that pleasure may attend both eye and ear, and that all may be steeped in happiness and good fortune."

Two years later, at the end of a fragmentary printed copy of the *Diamond Sūtra* (P. 11), Lei Yen-mei is definitely accorded the title of Superintendent of Block-engraving.[210] He had evidently been promoted in the interval. A novel feature of this block-print is that it takes the form, not of a roll but of a booklet, 14 × 10 cm. in size, of which however only four leaves remain. There are two or three hundred of such booklets in the Collection,

nearly all of the tenth century. A roll is not a very convenient thing to handle, even if you are careful to roll up one end as you unroll the other; and this is the beginning of a transition to the modern type of book with which we are familiar. The double leaf folded along the middle, with the inside left blank, was soon generally adopted in China; but perhaps because most of the paper then obtainable was too thick and coarse, or in order to avoid the wastefulness of writing on one side only, the Tunhuang booklets are all single-leaved, like ours. Possibly the earliest as well as the most beautiful of the printed documents, though undated, is a copy of the *Kuan Yin Sūtra* (P. 13) contained in a roll over 6½ feet long. The kind of yellow paper used seems to point to the eighth century. A short piece at the commencement is missing, but has been supplied in manuscript.

Besides the Kuan Yin prayer-sheet there are others featuring Amitābha, Mañjuśrī, and Vaiśramaṇa, which have been reproduced in Stein's *Serindia* and elsewhere. Next we have the greater part of a printed calendar (P. 6) for which no actual date now remains; but it includes an intercalary second moon, from which and other indications we can deduce with certainty that it refers to the year 877 (PLATE VIII). It is very closely printed in horizontal strips, with minute drawings and diagrams, of which the most noticeable is a representation of the twelve cyclical animals: three of them—the rat, the serpent, and the monkey—are marked as "lucky." [211] On general grounds we might be inclined to demur to this selection. P. 10 measures only 26 × 8 cm., but it has an importance out of all proportion to its size. While examining a great number of small fragments, mostly of no value, that formed the "sweepings" of the Stein Collection, I came across a scrap of light yellow paper crumpled up into a tight little ball. Having been smoothed out with some difficulty, it proved to be not a manuscript, but the upper right-hand corner, that is the initial portion, of yet another printed calendar, superior in workmanship to P. 6, and moreover bearing a date: "second year of the regnal period Chung-ho" [882]. This was the year after the capture of Ch'ang-an by Huang Ch'ao. It begins with the words "Family Calendar of Fan Shang of Ch'êng-tu Fu in Hsi-ch'uan, province of Chien-nan."[212] That is interesting because it was in this same province (the modern Szechwan) that the official Liu P'in[213] speaks of having seen a number of block-printed books during the summer of 883. This is the earliest known reference to printing (**17**, 30). The characters in the Museum fragment are thick and very black, and in the opinion of Mr. Y. W. Wang, Manager of the Commercial Press, Shanghai, to whom I showed it on his visit to this country, the printing must have been done

from clay, not wood. The last block-print to be mentioned is a set of Buddhist verses on the well-worn Confucian theme of the twenty-four examples of filial piety. They are attributed to the "late Grand Master Yüan-chien" [214] and are chiefly remarkable for the use of the same rhyme (*-ang*) fifty times running. The style of printing is similar to that of the *Diamond Sūtra* roll, but perhaps even finer. There is also a manuscript copy of this work.

This completes our summary account of the Stein Collection. As we have seen, the earliest date on any of the MSS. is 406, and the latest 995. It is possible, though not very likely, that one or two of the undated MSS. may be a little earlier than 406, and quite probable that some may be later than 995. At any rate, the whole period covered is approximately that of the Dark Ages in Europe, that is, from the fifth century, when the Roman Empire was crumbling, to the eleventh, when the Middle Ages began to develop their own culture. It is a stretch of time equal to that which has elapsed between the battle of Crécy and the present day. And, without even reckoning the other MSS. that have gone to Paris or Peking, there is a dated document, on the average, for more than every alternate year. Such an unbroken sequence is hardly to be paralleled in any other literature of the past.

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CHARACTERS FOR CHINESE NAMES AND WORDS

A—IN THE TEXT

1 敦煌 2 甘肅 3 千佛洞 4 西夏 5 般涅槃 6 妙法蓮華經 7 義淨 8 金光明最勝王經 9 摩訶般若波羅蜜多經 10 玄奘 11 般若波羅蜜多心經 12 維摩詰所說經 13 楞嚴經 14 無量壽宗要經 15 佛名經 16 十王經 17 報慈母十恩德 18 法顯 19 禪 20 楞伽經 21 佛說盂蘭盆經 22 太宗 23 崔子玉 24 玄武門 25 惠遠 26 道安 27 德祐 28 法性 29 寶慧 30 惠顒 31 道輔 32 惠御 33 道容 34 武后 35 韋后 36 鄧氏 37 阿彌陁經 38 中宗 39 安祿山 40 道德經 41 列子 42 莊子 43 老子 44 郭金基 45 本際經 46 无上秘要 47 馬處幽 48 神泉觀 49 沙州 50 馬抱一 51 風水 52 本草綱目 53 蜜 54 摩尼教下部讚 55 道明 56 十輪經 57 摩尼光佛教法儀略 58 杜預 59 曹元深 60 新集九經抄 61 張議潮 62 歸義軍 63 春秋後秦語 64 孔衍 65 蕭 66 歷代法寶記 67 晉昌 68 瓜州 69 籯金 70 燉煌錄 71 鳴沙山 72 樂傳 73 莫高 74 千字文 75 周興嗣 76 員外散騎侍郎 77 鍾銖 78 捉季布傳文 79 秦婦吟 80 長安 81 黃巢 82 韋莊 83 韓朋 84 董永 85 歎百歲詩 86 燕子賦 87 王梵志 88 氾富川 89 新集嚴父教 90 太公家教 91 武王 92 呂康 93 搜神記 94 侯雙 95 啓顏錄 96 劉丘子 97 太平廣記 98 王重民 99 伍子胥 100 秋胡 101 晉書 102 氾 103 茶酒論 104 王敷 105 碁經 106 梁武帝 107 文心雕龍 108 文選 109 應機抄 110 勵忠節鈔 111 孔子項託相問書 112 百行章 113 兔園策 114 武則天 115 神皇菩薩 116 寇讓之 117 鄧傳嗣 118 河西都僧統 119 張文徹 120 出帝 121 耶律德光 122 尙讓 123 節度使 124 曹元忠 125 公主君者者 126 北宅夫人司空小娘子 127 馬文斌 128 宕 129 鄧留定 130 安阿朵 131 書儀鏡 132 打毬會 133 楊將頭 134 富子 135 伯師一口 136 仙子 137 定千 138 定女 139 定勝 140 靈惠

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